

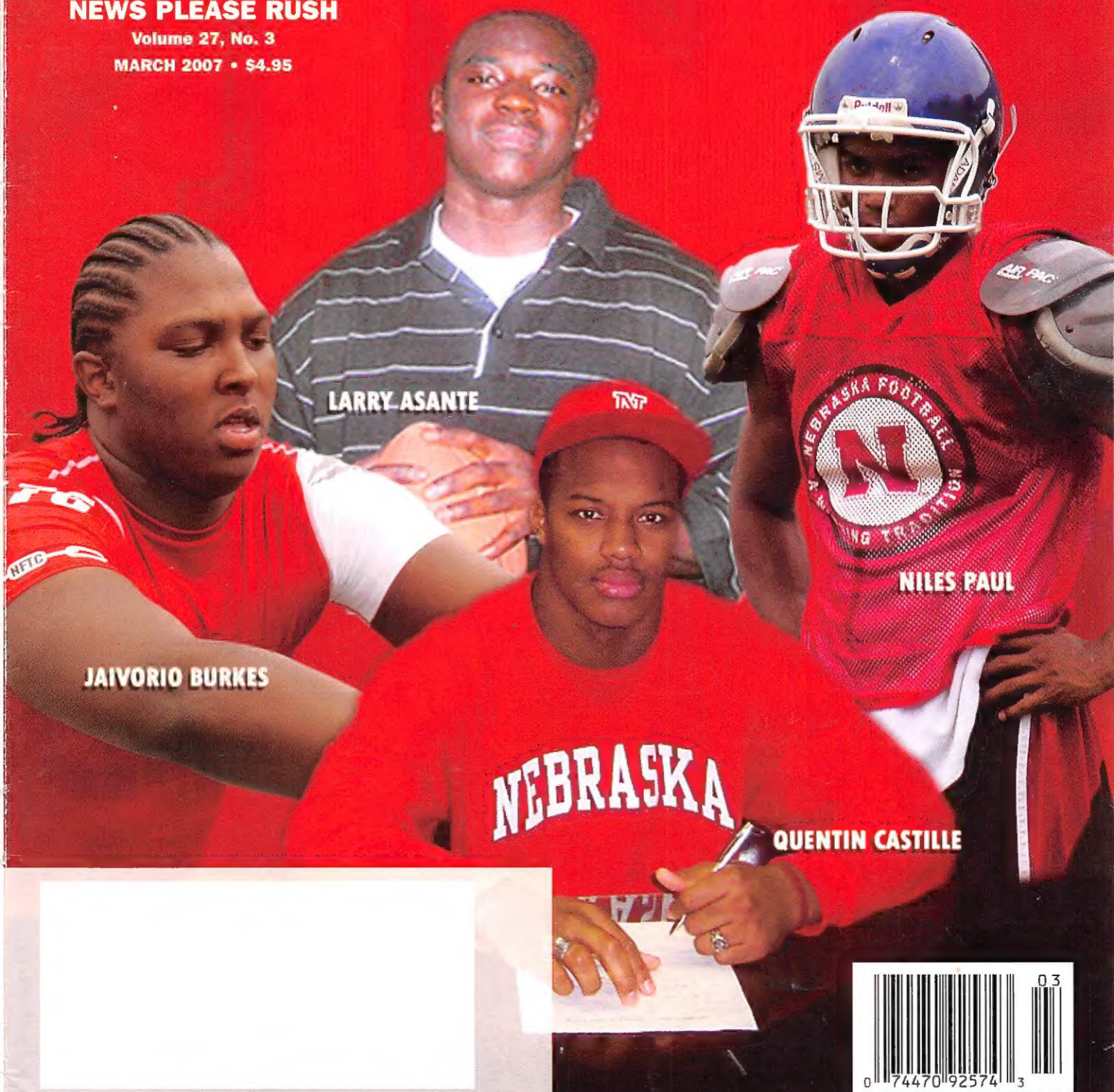
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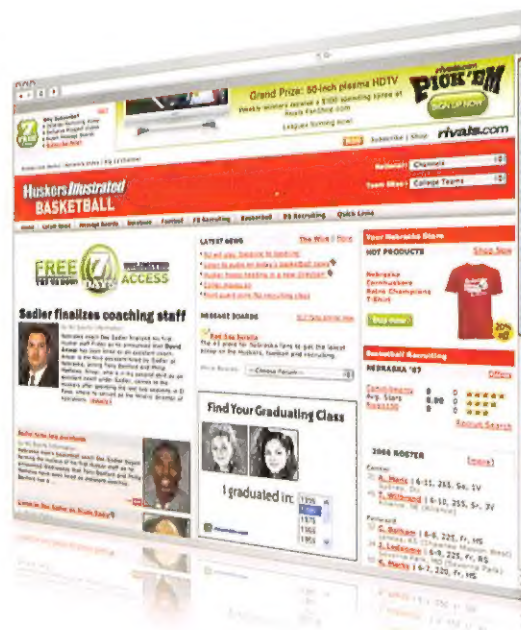


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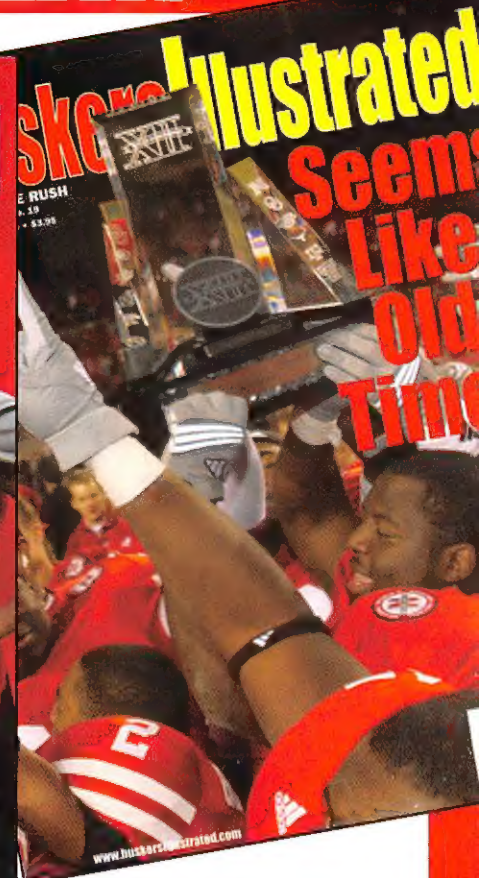
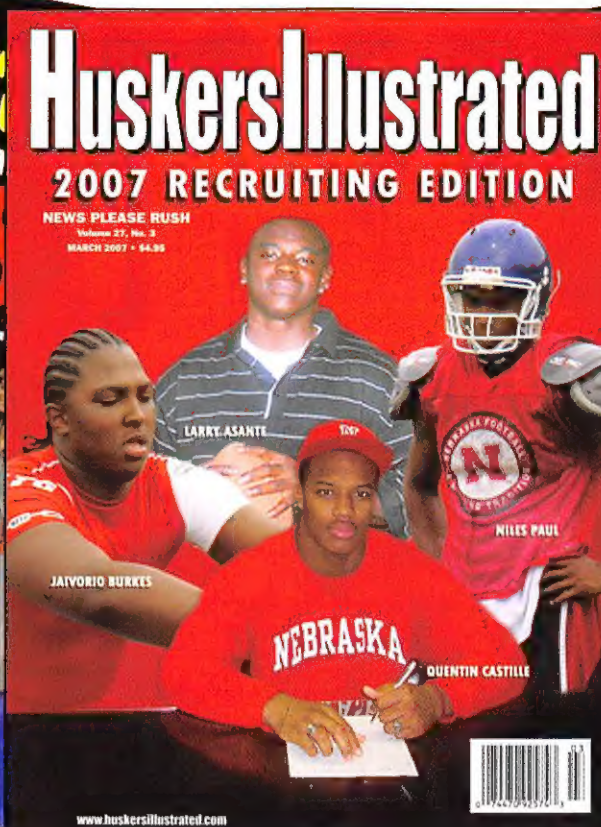
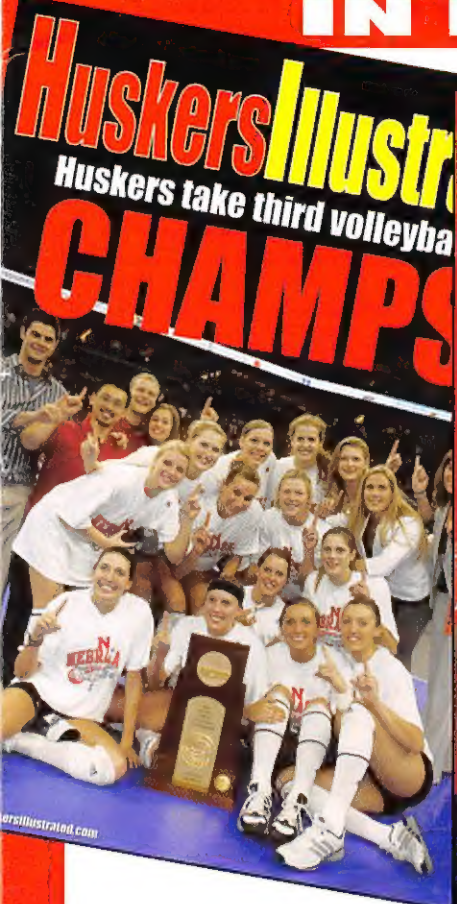


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## How Good?

**Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class ranks 13th, but some are calling it Callahan's best**



**Brian Hill**

NEBRASKA'S 2005 recruiting class had it all, including two "five-star" recruits. It was a consensus top-five class and ranked as high as No. 1.

Twelve of those 31 signees have left the program or didn't ever make it to Lincoln, not including junior college transfers Zac Taylor, Ola Dagunduro and Barry Cryer, who were seniors in 2006.

The class Nebraska signed Feb. 7 is ranked 13th nationally, and none of the players received five stars from Rivals.com, but some consider it the best of coach Bill Callahan's recruiting classes.

It's way too soon to tell, Callahan said on signing day.

"I'll always feel the same way," he said. "I'll wait and see how things go. I would say this. I love the character and the makeup of these kids. Their profile across the board is real solid and real stable."

"I think we're getting a real good student-athlete, a finished product, so to speak, in terms of character, goals and aspirations. They know what they want. They're driven kids. And you've got to have that in this day and age because these next four to five years for these kids is going to be challenging."

You can read much more about the 2007 class in this edition of *Huskers Illustrated*. Contributing editor Mike Babcock breaks down the class of 28,

including six players who enrolled in January.

Recruiting news hasn't been the only thing taking peoples' minds off a cold Nebraska winter. The night before signing day, the Husker men's basketball team won its second straight road game, defeating Bob Knight and Texas Tech, 61-59, in Lubbock.

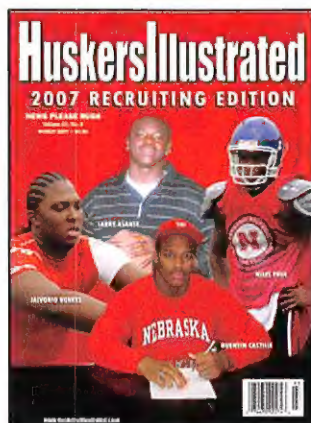
In the eight days after an embarrassing ESPN "Big Monday" performance against Kansas (NU trailed 43-16 at half-time before losing 76-56 at home), the Huskers responded with the rare back-to-back road victories at Missouri (66-61) and Texas Tech.

We also have a look at the impressive run by the Nebraska women, who were sailing along tied for first in the Big 12 and ranked 19th before a 70-69 loss to Texas Tech as this issue was going to press.

The Husker baseball team, which has had all of its workouts inside the new Hawks Championship Center since opening practice on Jan. 19, was headed to Texas to open the season. This issue includes a baseball preview and a look at the NU softball team, which just concluded a season-opening tournament in Hawaii.

The weather there was a far cry from that back in Lincoln, where it was colder and snowier than recent winters. The weather apparently didn't affect NU's football recruiting class, which included seven players from Texas, five from Arizona, four from California and three from Florida.

"I can't say it's a factor for all of them, but for a lot of them, it's not," Callahan said. "The opportunity (to play at Nebraska) is more important than the weather, and they can see through that (the weather) in terms of what the university offers them from an academic standpoint, what we do from the program's perspective and the particular people the players are going to be surrounded with is enticing enough." ■



### ON THE COVER

Among the four-star recruits in Nebraska's Class of 2007 are (clockwise from left) offensive lineman Jaivorio Burkes, defensive back Larry Asante, wide receiver Niles Paul and running back Quentin Castille. Cover photos courtesy of Rivals.com, Castille family. Design by Scott Bruhn.

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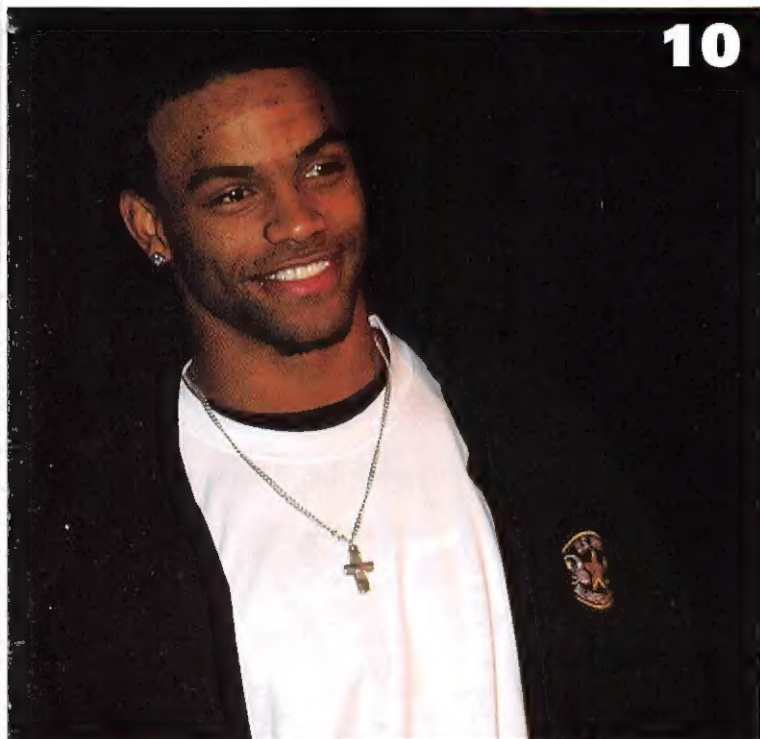


# Huskers Illustrated

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Although the defensive line and secondary were the focus, Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class had several highly regarded offensive players, including Omahan wide receiver Niles Paul (above). *By Mike Babcock*

## 17 RECRUIT CAPSULES

A closer look at the athletes in the Class of 2007.

## 31 FILLING NEEDS

Several members of the 2007 class will have the chance to contribute immediately.

## 32 WORTH THE WAIT

He may have been the last to visit, but Nebraska ended up getting the player it wanted in wide receiver Curenski Gilleylen.

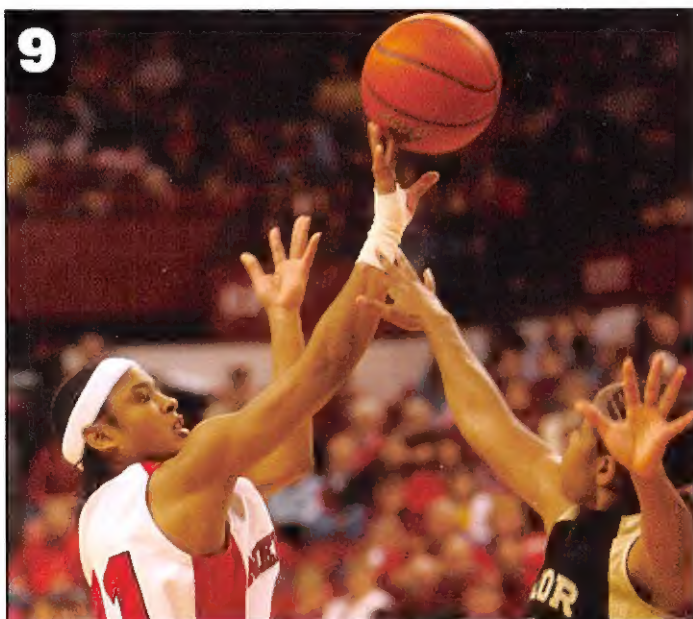
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# 'Opportunity'

When the last issue of Huskers Illustrated went on newsstands, Brandon Jackson was considering whether his future would include a senior season at Nebraska. Turns out it won't. On Jan. 15, the deadline for such a declaration, Jackson announced that he would be bypassing his final season of eligibility in favor of the NFL draft.

His official announcement came in the form of a sports information office release in which, among other things, he thanked coach Bill Callahan and staff for the opportunity to play at Nebraska. Coming off a "good year," he said, "I felt like the situation and the timing was right for me to advance to the professional level."

His decision had nothing to do with the Cotton Bowl game, he emphasized. "It was based on the opportunity in front of me to play at the next level in the NFL."

Jackson, who was limited in bowl practices by a healing broken hand suffered in the Big 12 championship game, carried only seven times against Auburn.

One of those carries went for 20 yards and a touchdown.

In any case, his decision came as something of a surprise. "We were hopeful that he would choose to stay at Nebraska," Callahan said in the same release.

Jackson emerged as the Cornhuskers' go-to back this season, the Cotton Bowl notwithstanding. He played sparingly in the I-back committee early, with Marlon Lucky as the starter, before stepping in. He had nine starts, before Lucky replaced him for the Cotton Bowl, and finished as the team's leading rusher with 989 yards.

He also scored 10 touchdowns, eight of them by rushing.

ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper, Jr. projected Jackson as a third-round selection. Other analysts have ranked him anywhere from the third-best running back available in this year's draft (scheduled for April 28-29) to the last on the list.

The consensus seems to be that the draft's top two running backs are Adrian Peterson, formerly of Oklahoma, and Marshawn Lynch, formerly of California. Both also are leaving college with a season of eligibility remaining.

Other running backs in the draft will include Michael Bush (Louisville), Antonio Pittman (Ohio State), Kenny



**Brandon Jackson rushed for 989 yards and eight touchdowns, including a 20-yard scoring run in the Cotton Bowl.**

Irons (Auburn), Darius Walker (Notre Dame), Garry Russell (Minnesota), Dwayne Wright (Fresno State) and Jon Cornish (Kansas).

Jackson would be the first Cornhusker running back selected in the draft since Correll Buckhalter and Dan Alexander with both selected in 2001.

Buckhalter was picked in the fourth round, Alexander in the sixth.

Jackson is the 10th Cornhusker to leave the program with eligibility remaining. The last to do so were Fabian Washington and Josh Bullocks in the 2005 draft.

"I have had a great three years there and this has been a hard decision to make because I have always tried to put the team first," Jackson said.

He indicated he would return to finish his degree.

Jackson was recruited by John Blake, who left in December to join Butch Davis at North Carolina. Jackson and Blake were close and Blake's departure might have been a factor in the decision to leave Nebraska early.

Blake also recruited Lucky, who reportedly considered transferring after the season. Lucky's high school coach told the Lincoln Journal Star he received "some good answers" to questions he posed to Callahan, otherwise he would have left.

Probably all Callahan needed to tell

## NEBRASKA'S EARLY-OUTS

**2005**

Fabian Washington, CB, Oakland (1st)  
Josh Bullocks, S, New Orleans (2nd)

**2002**

Toniu Fonoti, OG, San Diego (2nd)

**2001**

Dominic Raiola, C, Detroit (2nd)

**1998**

Ahman Green, RB, Seattle (3rd)

**1996**

Lawrence Phillips, RB, St. Louis (1st)

**1994**

Calvin Jones, RB, L.A. Rams (3rd)

**1993**

Derek Brown, RB, New Orleans (4th)

**1992**

Johnny Mitchell, TE, N.Y. Jets (1st)

the sophomore from North Hollywood, Calif., was where he stands in his (Callahan's) mind. "I think the world of Marlon Lucky," Callahan said on letter-of-intent-signing day. "I think you guys know that."

"He's just got tremendous up-side, not only as a ball carrier but as a receiver as well, maybe more up-side as a receiving-type back than any back here since I've been here, probably more than (Cory) Ross because he can get on the perimeter and get out there like a receiver, play that spot as well. So that's what I'm encouraged about."

"We haven't had a guy do that since we've been here."

Ross finished as the sixth-leading receiver in Cornhusker history. Lucky caught 32 passes for 383 yards last season, including six for 67 yards in the Cotton Bowl.

Lucky, who was bothered by a back problem late in the season, has "had a great off-season, a great start to the off-season, I should say," said Callahan.

"He's worked extremely hard, challenged himself." ■

## LUCKY HOSPITALIZED

Marlon Lucky was rushed by ambulance to Lincoln's BryanLGH Hospital in mid-February because of what the Nebraska Athletic Department described in a release as a "medical emergency." A release the next day said Lucky's condition had been up-graded to "fair" and he had been removed from the hospital's intensive care unit.

"We would like to make it clear that Marlon's medical emergency did not come about as a result of the use of alcohol or any illicit drugs. We are very appreciative of the thoughts and prayers for Marlon during this time," the release said.



# Quick Hits

## PAINFUL ORDEAL

Kenny Wilson capped Nebraska's 37-14 victory against Colorado with a 7-yard touchdown run. Apparently the knee problem began after that.

The junior I-back started having problems with his left knee, Bill Callahan said at the news conference to announce the Cornhuskers' 2007 recruiting class.

More specifically, Wilson's problems were related to an infection, which was really bothering him when the team began practicing for the Cotton Bowl.

He "practiced a little bit down in Dallas and did well at a couple of spots during the practice, then he had a relapse," said Callahan. "And when he came back from the bowl and started school in the second semester, he had a total relapse."

Wilson ended up in the hospital briefly while the infection cleared. "It's just been a painful ordeal for him. He's lost considerable weight," Callahan said.

"He should be up and moving, we hope, sometime next week."

That would have put him back on his feet in mid-February.

"He's been pretty much down, and I mean literally down, resting, recuperating and trying to get back from this infection," said Callahan. "We're all concerned."

"We're just happy it's nothing serious. We're very optimistic that he'll come back. Whether or not he'll be ready for spring or not we don't know." He won't be full-speed in any case.

Wilson appeared in 12 games in his first season at Nebraska, after transferring from Butler County (Kan.) Community College. He rushed for 335 yards and four touchdowns on 75 carries. He got 38 of those carries in back-to-back games against USC and Troy. He carried 19 times for 106 yards and two touchdowns against Troy.

Cody Glenn's availability for spring practice also is in question because of the foot injury that sidelined him for the final three games. However, "we're hopeful," Callahan said. "He hasn't run at all yet. He's doing all upper-body work in the weight room."

Other players who have already been ruled out of spring practice include: Corey Young, Seth Jensen, Jacob Hickman, Zac Lee, Barry Turner and Mike McNeill.

## COACHING CHANGES

The 2007 recruiting class was Shawn Watson's last as Nebraska's football recruiting coordinator. Watson will relinquish those duties after replacing Jay Norvell as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. Norvell left the Cornhuskers in late January to become the offensive coordinator for coach Karl Dorrell at UCLA.

Norvell will call plays for the Bruins.

Watson has proven himself at the collegiate level, Callahan said in a release announcing the change in responsibilities. He was the offensive coordinator at Colorado for six of his seven seasons in Boulder and coached the Buffaloes' quarterbacks. He also was the head coach at Southern Illinois for three seasons.

"He has an excellent offensive mind and has worked in this type of offensive system for a number of years," said Callahan. "Shawn is also extremely organized and detail-oriented, and I am excited to have him lead our offensive unit."

The process of naming a tight ends coach and recruiting coordinator would begin following letter-of-intent-signing day, Callahan said.

Staff changes — Nebraska lost John Blake to North Carolina in December — can have an effect on recruiting. "In some regard," said Callahan. "I think John was an excellent coach and recruiter. He's going to do tremendously well at North Carolina and wants to be a head coach, aspires to be a head coach, as does Jay."

"It's a balancing act, but players understand there's movement, and when you want something for your coaches, and you explain to (recruits) these are opportunities for a coach and their families to improve themselves, I think kids . . . would want their coach to do well and move on, have some great things in their life. So they accept that."

As a result, "there wasn't any tremendous fallout in that regard."

The program is larger than coaches or players, according to Callahan. "It stands on its own merit," he said. "It still comes down



Kenny Wilson



Shawn Watson

to the product, and the product is the University of Nebraska and the great tradition we have here."

## PAVAN REACHES PINNACLE

So what else is new? The Huskers' Sarah Pavan, the nation's top female collegiate volleyball player on the nation's top collegiate team, was named the winner of the 2006-07 Honda Sports Award for volleyball. The award is based on voting by 1,000 NCAA member schools as part of the Collegiate Women Sports Awards Program. The program is in its 31st year.

Pavan is Nebraska's sixth Honda Sports Award winner, joining volleyball players Greichaly Cepero (200-01), Allison Weston (1995-96) and Karen Dahlgren (1986-87), softball player Denise Eckert (1984-85) and gymnast Heather Brink (1999-2000).

"I am honored to represent collegiate women volleyball players all over the country," said Pavan, who noted that she grew up idolizing volleyball players on the list such as Logan Tom, Misty May and Flo Hyman, the first winner in 1976-77.



Sarah Pavan

## MORE VOLLEYBALL

College Volleyball Update named Nebraska setter Rachel Holloway the National Freshman of the Year and included her among five finalists for the publication's setter-of-the-year award, won by Washington's Courtney Thompson.

Holloway was the second freshman setter to lead a team to the NCAA championship. She was named to the NCAA Championship's all-tournament team, after being chosen as the Big 12 volleyball newcomer of the year.

Former Husker Dani Busboom, who moved from setter to libero in 2006 and earned conference co-libero of the year honors, was added to the United States Women's National Volleyball Team in late January.

Busboom, a four-year starter at Nebraska, is among 10 on the squad practicing at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Nebraska assistant coach Charlene Johnson-Tagalao, a former U.S. National player and 2000 Olympian, will be leaving the program at the end of February. Johnson-Tagalao, who has worked with the setters the past four seasons, wants to be able to spend more time with her three children.

Husker freshman Brooke Bartek, announced in mid-January that she planned to transfer before next season, and coach John Cook indicated he would release her from scholarship. Bartek saw limited action as an outside hitter this season.

## SENIOR BOWL SUCCESS

Now former Cornhusker defensive end Jay Moore helped his NFL draft potential with his performance in the Senior Bowl game. He was credited with three sacks, two forced fumbles and two quarterback hurries in a 27-0 North victory.

Two other former Cornhuskers also enhanced their value with their play during practice leading up to the all-star game as well as in the game. Stewart Bradley was credited with five tackles and forced a fumble in the game, while Adam Carriker was so impressive in workouts that ESPN's Mel Kiper Jr., projected him as the 16th pick overall. Such projections could change following the NFL Combine in Indianapolis.

## SOUTHERN CAL

After the Cotton Bowl game, sophomore place-kicker Jordan Congdon announced he was transferring closer to home in San Diego. Initially, it appeared he would be going to Mesa College in San Diego, with an outside possibility of his returning.

That won't happen now. Congdon transferred to USC.

Adi Kunalic, a member of the 2007 scholarship recruiting class, will be among those competing to replace him in the fall. Kunalic is a "tough guy for a kicker," said Callahan.

## ACADEMICS

A total of 270 Cornhusker student-athletes earned Big 12 Commissioner's Fall Honor Roll recognition by achieving a grade-point average of 3.0 or higher, with 33 of them posting a perfect 4.0 GPA for the semester. ■



## No Room For Excuses

*Sadler says, 'If just competing's enough, then you don't need to wear a Nebraska uniform'*



**Mike BABCOCK**

Much was made of the early-morning practice, which went "very, very" well Sadler would say later, probably too much, in fact.

Three days after the Oklahoma loss, the Cornhuskers defeated Colorado 71-50 at home. Some attributed that to the early-morning practice.

"I don't know that it had any impact at all," Sadler said. "Obviously, if I thought it had that big of an impact, we'd be doing it every morning. It was just a situation when you play Wednesday-Saturday, there's just not a lot of time.

"You've got to find time to get in a practice. If there are some things you're not doing, then you need the extra work. And that's what I felt we needed."

Some felt what the Cornhuskers needed at that point was rest. From Nov. 29 until the Colorado game on Jan. 20 they had played at home only three times, traveling to New Jersey and Oregon, Hawaii and Miami and then to Iowa State and Oklahoma. Sadler wasn't among them. "There have been some questions about are we tired, this and this and this," he said. "I've said all along, you can make excuses for anything."

Four days after the Colorado victory, Nebraska played Texas at the Sports Center. Though the Longhorns had dropped out of the national rankings, they were formidable, featuring some phenomenal freshmen, including Kevin Durant.

The Cornhuskers were a missed buzzer shot short of beating Texas. The score was 62-61. Texas was held to about 30 points under its average.

But Sadler wasn't happy. "The thing I told our basketball team, they've got the wrong guy coaching them if they think I'm going to be satisfied (losing) by one point to Texas. That ain't happening. We made too many mistakes, and that's my fault," he said afterward. "That's a game we should have won . . . or had a chance to win and didn't. Winning a close ball game, that's a reflection on coaches and toughness.

"And we didn't win this basketball game."

Fast forward to Feb. 10 and a 66-55 loss at the Sports Center against best buddy Billy Gillispie's Texas A&M team, ranked No. 6 nationally at the time.

"I thought our guys competed," Sadler said. "But I'm going to say this, and I told our team this, competing ain't enough. If just competing's enough, then you don't need to wear a Nebraska uniform. I'm disappointed. We made so many mistakes.

"And you can't make mistakes against a quality team as they are."

Such anecdotal evidence might be the best way to express what could be taken as opinion but more likely is fact: Sadler is the right coach for Nebraska.

When he was introduced in early August, he promised not wins and losses but effort, players who would dive for loose balls and go all out — or get out. He has made good on that promise, as well as remaining as accessible as he said he would be.

He's as straight-forward as he is passionate, as demanding as he is self-effacing. He's unpretentious, a perfect fit for an unpretentious state.

And he's principled, as evidenced by a decision, following the A&M game, to suspend sophomore Jamel White for the remainder of the season. Sadler wouldn't say why, and he wouldn't say whether White could return next season.

With White's suspension and the loss of scholarship players Kris Douse and Jim Ledsome, both of whom transferred at semester break, Sadler is establishing his program with a core of nine scholarship players and walk-on Paul Velder.

They all played in a 74-63 victory against Kansas State at home, reversing a 61-45 loss against the Wildcats at Manhattan in late January.

Redshirted freshman Mike Smith hadn't played at all in five conference games, and only 27 minutes combined in the other four. But he earned praise from Sadler for his contribution. "As I've said before, whoever shows up for practice is who we're going to play," said Sadler. "Everybody stepped up, and that's what you've got to have."

The Kansas State victory left Nebraska 4-6 in the Big 12, with six regular-season games remaining, three at home and three on the road beginning with Kansas, which jumped to a 43-8 lead on the way to winning in Lincoln 76-56.

Beating Kansas State made the Kansas match "a free game," Sadler said.

Regardless of what happened in Lawrence, the Cornhuskers had positioned themselves for a stretch run. "Then we get to come home and take one game at a time, see where this thing ends up," he said.

Nebraska fans couldn't ask for anything more. ■



**Doc Sadler held an early practice after the loss to Oklahoma.**

**Mike Babcock** is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 25 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.



## Wanting More

*Husker women the talk of the Big 12 as they continue to add to their list of firsts*



**Curt McKEEVER**

EACH ENTRY the Nebraska women's basketball team has added to its list of first accomplishments this season has seemed to be more impressive than the last.

In January, the Huskers started Big 12 Conference action by posting their first-ever win at Texas.

On the same week in early February, team members tasted their first victory at Kansas State and then gave the school back-to-back wins at Colorado for the first time since 1984 and '85.

Those results are a reason why NU entered the week of Valentine's Day with a flowery and unprecedented record of 21-4 overall and 9-2 in the Big 12 Conference that was good for a first-place tie and No. 19 ranking in the Associated Press poll.

It might seem a bit surreal for fifth-year coach Connie Yori, who knows there's a process to becoming a championship program, but must swell with pride over the fact her players are acting like they've been there before.

Senior forward Chelsea Aubry's explanation for that starts with the fact Nebraska has four senior starters, two of whom — herself and Jelena Spiric — have played for their country's national teams.

And so, "We've played in big games and against big-time players, and I think it's not new for us," Aubry said. "But I think we just want it, and we know that we have to stay calm and composed to get what we want."

Following NU's first win at Kansas State since 2001, Aubry did let her guard down for a second when she said, "We don't know what this feels like."

But she moved right past that thought and made it clear the Huskers weren't about to get googly eyed over their success.

"It's a huge number," she said of the win total, "but at the same time it really doesn't mean much. We want more."

As in more than just wins.

It's the way Nebraska has been winning, though, that has made Yori's bunch the talk of the Big 12.

The Huskers' victory at Colorado marked the eighth time in nine games they hadn't trailed in the second half.

"There's a reason they're a top 25 team now," said Iowa State coach Bill Fennelly, who listed the Huskers third on his Big 12 preseason ballot, primarily because he's sensed their momentum building for the past couple years. "We've always believed you stick with who you are. Don't change that."

"Connie had great success at Creighton — with teams that always had great guards, that defended and ran good offense. (At Nebraska), it's the same thing, to be honest with you — with a little better player, especially post players."

In addition to Aubry, who combines the rare combination of being able to bang inside with a shooting touch that had her leading the league in three-point accuracy, Nebraska looks to

sophomore forward Kelsey Griffin, who was top six in the league in both scoring and rebounding.

Then, of course, there's two-time All-Big 12 guard Kiera Hardy.

"They understand any given possession where their best opportunity is to get the next basket, and that is just the sign of a great team," Kansas State coach Deb Patterson said of the Huskers. "They really do a nice job on the offensive end of knowing who to go to when, of playing that 30-second possession in getting a quality shot and then doing the work phases of the game at the defensive end."

While Nebraska is understandably getting lavished with praise for its rise, Yori is quick to note her past three teams won no fewer than 18 games.

"We were seventh, sixth and sixth in the Big 12 the last three years, you know?" she said. "It's not like we've been horrible and all of a sudden this is like 'Whoa, where's this coming from?' I mean, we've been competitive."

However, being competitive got Nebraska to the WNIT the past three seasons. Being more than competitive is leading the Huskers to the preferred tournament this season.

The last time Nebraska made the NCAA field was in 2000, which marked its third straight appearance under Paul Sanderford. The Huskers then had two losing seasons, going 4-12 in the Big 12 during both, bringing about the hiring of Yori. When her first team went 8-20 and finished last in the league, the Huskers couldn't have appeared any further from returning to the Big Dance.

"When you're starting in the basement, and we felt like we had to change the culture here, you can't do that in a really quick fashion," Yori said.

Her team, which has three players in their fourth year in the program, is paying big returns on that investment.

"Oh my goodness, it's fun," Aubry said. "Of course, it's fun winning, but I think what makes this year so (special) is because of the people and the attitudes and just how everyone has come together."

For one composed cause.

After beating Kansas State on its floor, the Huskers waited until they were behind the closed doors of their locker room before celebrating. They did the same at Colorado, where before that result NU had lost 24 of 27 games on the Buffaloes' court.

"You have your ups and downs, but you've just got to play through it," senior guard Ashley Ford said. "If there is some (struggles), we battle back from it. We stick together, and I think that's what's brought us this far — believing in each other." ■



**Senior Chelsea Aubry leads the Big 12 in three-point accuracy.**

**Curt McKeever** is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for baseball. Curt can be reached at [cmckeever@journalstar.com](mailto:cmckeever@journalstar.com)



# A Lot on

## ***Defensive line depth was a priority in filling NU's 2007 class***

**By Mike Babcock**

**C**onsider the demand for PlayStation 3 gaming systems when they were first released. Folks camped out overnight, in the cold, to be first in line.

That's a little like the recruiting interest in defensive linemen.

"Whether they're inside players or outside players, you can scour the country; there's just not enough of them," Bill Callahan said on letter-of-intent-signing day. "Those guys, they go off the board quicker and faster than any other position."

As with quarterbacks on offense, defensive tackles, in particular, "fly off the board," he said. "So any time you've got a chance to grab one, and I'm talking about a good one, it just behooves you to grab them and sign them, get them in the fold."

Callahan wasn't talking theoretically. He was talking realistically as he assessed his fourth Cornhusker recruiting class. Of the 28 players in the 2007 class, five are defensive tackles and two are defensive ends. In other words, defensive linemen comprise one-fourth of the class. And that's "huge," he said.

By his estimation, five defensive linemen have been lost: Adam Carriker, Jay Moore, Ola Dagunduro, Barry Cryer and . . . Stewart Bradley, of course.

Though Bradley was a strongside linebacker, Callahan considered him a "fifth defensive lineman because he played on the line of scrimmage. So I really felt the urgency to go ahead and add and build the depth at that position.

"I felt it was crucial that we get a couple of big guys, some run-stoppers inside, that can help us continue our success against the run."

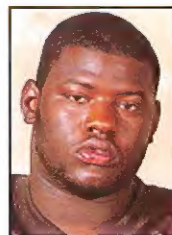
"Whether they're inside players or outside players, you can scour the country; there's just not enough of them. Those guys, they go off the board quicker and faster than any other position."

**— Coach Bill Callahan**

## **FEATURE STORY**

Three of the tackles are junior college transfers, the biggest of whom, Shukree Barfield, is already enrolled and will go through spring practice. Kevin Dixon and Joseph Townsend are among those who will have to wait for training camp to begin.

"You can never have enough of those guys that can deal with the run and play physical inside, in one-gap and two-gap and create a presence for you and problems (for the offense) in terms of



**Shukree Barfield**



# the Line



tying up the center and the guards and not allowing those particular blockers up on the second level (linebackers)," said Callahan.

"So we see power. We see size. We see explosiveness." Bottom line, "it's exciting to see," he said.

Two of the other five members of the class already on campus, Larry Asante and Armando Murillo, are defensive backs — also one-fourth of this year's recruits.

The list released on signing day included only five defensive backs. But incoming freshmen Prince Amukamara and Eric Hagg, who were identified as "athletes," will be playing in the secondary when practice begins in the fall.

"That's a fine, fine group of athletes and will give us the depth and the size to help us at that particular spot,"

said Callahan.

Quarterbacks are always a recruiting priority, and the class includes two, both of whom enrolled for second semester: Zac Lee and Patrick Witt.

However, Lee, a transfer from San Francisco City College, won't practice in the spring because of a knee injury suffered in the California junior college championship game. He underwent surgery and arrived at Nebraska on crutches.

Lee recently discarded the crutches. "He's anxious," Callahan said. "It's tough to be hurt, especially at that position. You want to get out and compete. He's watching all these other guys throw right now, and he wants to get in the mix pretty badly."

Witt, a freshman who graduated high school early, has joined Joe Ganz, Sam Keller and Beau Davis in the unsupervised passing.

Quarterbacks, by the nature of their position, draw more attention than defensive linemen. But players such as Barfield, Dixon and Townsend "are outstanding players you just can't pass up on," said Callahan. "They're just too good to say, 'You know what, we don't want them in this class. Let's move somewhere else.' They were there, the need was there, and we just added a few more as we moved along."



Zac Lee



Patrick Witt

## BILL'S BEST?

The Cornhuskers' class ranked No. 13 nationally according to Rivals.com, with no five-star recruits but 11 four-star players. Even though it doesn't rank nearly as high as the 2005 class, which included Zack Bowman and Marlon Lucky, some analysts have described it as Callahan's best class, potentially, top to bottom.

Callahan, however, is withholding judgment. "I'll always feel the same way," he said. "I'll wait and see. I would say this to you, I love the character and the make-up of these kids. Their profile across the board is real solid and real stable.

"So I think we're getting a real good student-athlete, a finished product so to speak, in terms of character and goals and aspirations. They know what they want. They're driven kids. And you've got to have that in this



day and age."

As for a coach, he has to have production.

"If they can develop the way we think they can, then I'll be here four years from now, answering that question," Callahan said with a laugh.

## FEWER JUCOS

The class includes six junior college transfers, four of whom have enrolled. That's the fewest since Callahan's first season. Last year's class included seven. The 2005 class included 11, the most ever in a single year at Nebraska.

"I'm never going to close the door on that," Callahan said of junior college recruiting. "We're gravitating more toward high school players. I think junior college players, in general, are a good option to fill a void or a need or to balance up a particular area because a lot of things can happen in three or four years."

Only six of the 22 junior college players Callahan and his staff have recruited have left without contributing enough to earn at least one letter. Going the junior college route "is a great option to have, providing that you get the right guy," he said.

"It's important to get the right guy in junior college recruiting, and I think we've been really lucky and fortunate in that respect."

Of course, luck is the residue of design.

## NO PLACE LIKE NEBRASKA

Niles Paul might be the most prominent in-state recruit in Callahan's four classes, or at least since Cortney Grixby came from Omaha Central in the first class.

Asked what impressed him most about Paul, Callahan replied, "Everything about him. You name it, his character, his athletic ability, his presence."

"What's unique about Niles is that he knows exactly what he wants. That shows tremendous focus for a young man, for an individual to be that locked in to what he wants and knows where he wants to go in life. I've got a lot of respect for that."

Paul, the nephew of former Cornhusker I-back Ahman Green, knew he wanted to go to Nebraska. He was the first in the class to orally commit, doing so in January of 2006, as a junior at Omaha North High School. "He always wanted to be here," said Callahan. "This is an individual that could have gone anywhere in the country. He could have gone to any school and taken a (recruiting) trip. He didn't confuse the issue."

"He didn't make it kind of a dog-and-pony shot, so to speak, traveling all over the country; he was a high-profile player. He's a very humble guy in that regard."

In addition to his potential as a wide receiver and kick returner, Paul is "the type of guy we want to be in this program because he'll affect so many guys positively," Callahan said. "We're looking for great leadership out of Niles Paul."

Sounds a lot like Grixby.

## DON'T FORGET THE WALK-ONS

Paul is among only three Nebraskans among the schol-



Wide receiver recruit Niles Paul, the first in the class to commit back in January of 2006, made it official on Feb. 7 at Omaha North High School.

arship recruits. But the state hasn't been ignored. The letter-of-intent-signing-day release included 12 in-state walk-ons, headed by Austin Cassidy, an outstanding player at Lincoln Southwest High and the son of Cornhusker associate athletic director for football Tim Cassidy.

"I know there are more (walk-ons) coming, but we couldn't announce them because their papers haven't been finalized yet," said Callahan.

In addition to Cassidy, a Super-State quarterback who



was listed as a defensive back, the in-state walk-ons announced on signing day were: Matt Donahue, WR/DB, Fremont; Taylor Escamilla, DL, Fremont; Ben Franzluebbbers, DL, Dodge; Thomas Grove, RB/LB, Arlington; Cory Iske, OL, Millard; Ben Lester, WR, Tecumseh; Luke Lingenfelter, DE, Plainview; Matthew May, FS/RB, Imperial; Mike Masin, OL, Lincoln; Kevin Thomsen, FB/DL, Elkhorn; Lance Thorell, RB/DB, Loomis.

"I like the fact a lot of them have been recruited to go to other places, so there's an unselfishness and selflessness with these guys," Callahan said.

Reports of the demise of the walk-on program have been greatly exaggerated.

## DANIEL BULLOCKS II

Junior college transfer Larry Asante, another of those already enrolled in classes, received high praise from Callahan, who compared his "measurables" to those of former Cornhusker Daniel Bullocks. Except for height, they're "pretty similar."

Asante "has all the attributes you look for in a big-time safety," said Callahan. "That's what generates the excitement from our staff, the fact that he's an impact hitter, collision player, has a lot of upside in terms of his intelligence, savvy and his knack for the different roles, the various roles, we can put him in."

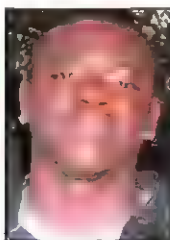
Asante could play nickel back as well as strong safety and is considered to be prominent among those in the class who will have an immediate impact.

Nebraska has had success with junior college transfers stepping in quickly. Last season, Andre Jones earned a Blackshirt in training camp. The year before, Zack Bowman began as the starting nickel and became a starting cornerback.

Oh yes, in case you forgot, Bullocks was a second-round draft pick of the Detroit Lions. Asante has a challenge in translating his "measurables" into that production.

## PLAYING RIGHT AWAY

Nebraska addressed a need in recruiting defensive backs. Seven in the class will begin in the secondary, remember. But other than Asante, "it's too early to say whether any of them can come in and play early," Callahan said.



Larry Asante



Phoenix-area recruits (from left) Marcel Jones, William Yancy, Jaivorio Burkes, Eric Hagg and Prince Amukamara gathered for a signing-day ceremony at Ironwood High School. In back is Ironwood basketball coach Todd Hanson.

"We haven't determined any roles yet. I think, in all fairness, they need an opportunity to be coached in terms of our system. I would like to tell you they all could (play right away), but I think they probably would have a better chance of playing special teams first, before they begin their role as a corner or safety."

Rickey Thenarse, Major Culbert and Corey Young all contributed as true freshmen last season, but almost exclusively on special teams.

"I think it's safe to say we'll need all those guys on special teams, (to) improve our coverage units and return units," said Callahan.

## BIGGER THAN HE LOOKS

Running back Quentin Castille is among the incoming freshmen who might be able to contribute right away. "He's a big, physical guy," Callahan said. "When I went down there and visited with his family, I just couldn't



Quentin Castille is surrounded by family members during a signing-day ceremony in La Porte, Texas.



believe the size of him. He was 245, 250 pounds, and he looked like he was about 215. He's a big, lean guy.

He's extremely productive, and for his size, it's uncanny the abilities that he has to not only run the ball inside for a big, physical back but the quickness and speed he has on the perimeter as well. He's got good hands. This is just a tremendous back."

Nebraska was well-stocked with running backs this season. But things have changed. Brandon Jackson is bypassing his final season of eligibility for the NFL draft. Kenny Wilson will miss spring practice while recovering from a knee infection. And Cody Glenn remains questionable for the spring, leaving Marlon Lucky.

"I hope that situation improves," said Callahan. But come fall, Castille, as well as Ray Helu and Marcus Mendoza "definitely add to the depth."

Mendoza, a freshman, will get a head start in spring practice.



Linebacker recruit Blake Lawrence (red N on sweatshirt) poses with family members at Shawnee Mission West High School in Overland Park, Kan.

## WEATHER NO PROBLEM

Nebraska's weather proved to be no recruiting obstacle. A significant number of players call sunshine states home. A dozen members of the class are from Arizona, California and Florida. "Kids in this day and age, I don't think that's

a factor, for some. I can't say it is for all, but (for) a lot of them it's not," Callahan said.

"The opportunity's more important than the weather."

In addition, recruits make unofficial visits at all times of the year. Jaivorio Burkes, for example, came to campus from Phoenix during the summer and toured the newly completed Tom and Nancy Osborne Complex and meet the coaches.

"I believe that really laid the groundwork for him establishing the relationship with this staff and, of course, Coach (Bill) Busch," said Callahan.

## LOOKS GOOD IN GRAY

At least one member of the class will delay going on scholarship. Aaron Schulte, an offensive lineman from Norfolk, Neb., will sit out as a grayshirt. He is "one of those big-statured Nebraska linemen that you look for," Callahan said.

Jacob Hickman, who

## WHAT DO THEY THINK?

### Jeremy Crabtree, Rivals.com

"Signing one of the best mixes of junior college and high school prospects in the country, the Huskers' class ranks second in the Big 12 in front of recruiting foes Oklahoma and Texas A&M. That had a lot to do with two juco prospects rated in the top 10 nationally, a strong showing in Texas, and two of the top five prospects in Arizona. This class may not rank as high as 2005, but I definitely believe it's Bill Callahan's best class that he's landed since he's been there in Lincoln."

### Sean Callahan, HuskersIllustrated.com

The thing that really stands out to me about the 2007 signing class is for the third year in a row Bill Callahan and his staff proved they can bring in a high profile group of recruits. In 2005, most people said NU's class was good because Callahan was able to offer immediate playing time. The 2006 class dropped off some, so for Nebraska to come back with a highly ranked class in 2007 speaks volumes for Callahan and his staff. This class is deeper than the 2005 class, and the junior college players Callahan has signed for the most part will all be on campus for spring football."



played in the offensive line as a true freshman in 2006, was originally a member of the 2005 recruiting class but delayed full-time enrollment as a grayshirt, which meant he couldn't join the team until the spring of 2006.

### EARLY SIGNING, PLEASE

Callahan made a pitch to the NCAA for an early signing period for letters of intent. The recruiting process is "really accelerated," he said, and because of that, an early signing date "would be a great advantage," particularly for Nebraska.

"If they could ever get the early signing date for a high school player, boy, we'd be enthralled with that because a lot of our visits occur during the in-season. And as we all know, it is tough and becoming tougher to hold a commitment from day one all the way to Feb. 7 (this year's signing date)," Callahan said.

"It's becoming tougher and more demanding, and I just believe as a coach, you want to be able to be a little clear in terms of commitment when they come to your school and they make that commitment to your school. You want an opportunity to sign them up if they're that excited about it, instead of waiting for an extended period of time."

What are the chances that football, like basketball, will have an early signing period? "I think the day's coming where we're going to see that," said Callahan.

### DE-COMMITS HAPPEN

Nebraska couldn't hold two oral commitments down the stretch. First Travis Lewis, a linebacker from San

Antonio, Texas, changed his mind, then David Ross, a cornerback from Compton, Calif., backed out. Both were four-star players.

"What's funny about the recruiting process is you throw your offer out there and you look to take a person's word on a commitment," Callahan said.

Ross, who committed in December, didn't announce he had changed his mind until the morning of letter-of-intent-signing day. He signed with Oregon State. His decommitment "wasn't unexpected in a lot of senses," said Callahan.

"We kind of knew it was going to be a tough 'get' to begin with."

Lewis, who had committed in November, signed with Oklahoma.

"Sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't," Callahan said. "The only thing I'll tell you is, we're going to maintain our integrity of what we do here at Nebraska. For the few that do elect to go another direction, that's OK. It doesn't really bother us in that respect. It's disappointing, but I think, overall, I'm more pleased with the guys that are committed, that do make the commitment to come here."

The Cornhuskers tried to add "a couple of other kids, to no avail," he said. "That's going to happen. It's hard to turn guys late and come back in on guys when they're essentially committed or connected into a particular university. But it's crazy. Recruiting's crazy in this day and age; I've got to tell you that.

"And it's getting crazier."

If the enthusiasm in his voice was evidence, however, he doesn't mind. ■

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# 2007

## NEBRASKA FOOTBALL SIGNEES

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (High School/College)
Prince Amukamara	ATH	6-1	180	Glendale, Ariz. (Apollo HS)
Larry Asante*	DB	6-1	205	Alexandria, Va. (Hayfield HS/Coffeyville, Kan., CC)
Shukree Barfield*	DT	6-4	310	Camden, N.J. (Camden HS/Garden City, Kan., CC)
Anthony Blue	DB	5-10	175	Cedar Hill, Texas (Cedar Hill HS)
Jaivorio Burkes	OL	6-5	315	Phoenix, Ariz. (Moon Valley HS)
Quentin Castille	RB	6-1	235	La Porte, Texas (La Porte HS)
Jared Crick	DE	6-6	260	Cozad, Neb. (Cozad HS)
Demetrious Davis	DT	6-2	285	St. Joseph, Mo. (Benton HS)
Kevin Dixon	DT	6-3	295	Yero Beach, Fla. (Sebring HS/Garden City, Kan., CC)
Curenski Gilleylen	WR	6-0	210	Leander, Texas (Leander HS)
Eric Hagg	ATH	6-1	195	Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood HS)
Roy Helu	RB	6-0	220	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon Valley HS)
Ryan Hill	TE	6-3	230	Arvada, Colo. (Arvada West HS)
Marcel Jones	OL	6-7	300	Phoenix, Ariz. (Trevor Browne HS)
Adi Kunalic	K	6-0	175	Fort Worth, Texas (North Crowley HS)
Blake Lawrence	LB	5-2	200	Overland Park, Kan. (Shawnee Mission West HS)
Zac Lee*	QB	6-2	205	San Francisco, Calif. (St. Ignatius Prep/ San Francisco City College)
Marqus Mendoza**	RB	5-10	175	Houston, Texas (Spring Woods HS)
Terrence Moore	DT	5-3	275	New Orleans, La. (McDonogh 35 Senior HS)
Armando Munillo*	DB	6-0	195	Tampa, Fla. (Robinson HS/Eastern Arizona CC)
Niles Paul	WR	6-1	210	Omaha, Neb. (Omaha North HS)
Aaron Schulte	OL	6-6	320	Norfolk, Neb. (Norfolk Catholic HS)
Austin Stafford	LB	6-2	205	Hayward, Calif. (Hayward HS)
Shawn Sullivan	DB	5-10	190	Brenham, Texas (Brenham HS)
Joseph Townsend	DT	5-3	285	San Jose, Calif. (Valley Christian HS/Foothill CC)
Latravis Washington	DB	6-3	210	Bradenton, Fla. (Bayshore HS)
Patrick Witt**	QB	6-4	215	Wylie, Texas (Wylie HS)
William Yancy	DE	6-4	230	Glendale, Ariz. (Ironwood HS)

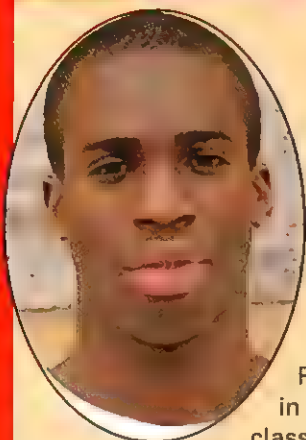
\*Indicates mid-year signee

\*\*Enrolled at Nebraska in January

Capsules compiled by Sean Stevens, Rick Shaw, Brian Hill & NU Sports Information  
Photos: HuskersIllustrated.com, Rivals.com, NU Sports Information, Hill Country News



## PRINCE AMUKAMARA



**Athlete**  
**Glendale, Ariz.**  
**[Apollo]**  
**6-1/180/4.5**



**BIO:** Amukamara is one of five players from the Phoenix metropolitan area in the Huskers' 2007 signing class. Though he'll likely be

tried first at cornerback,

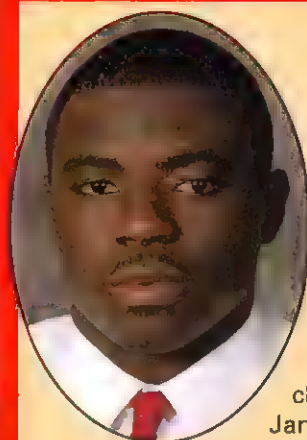
Amukamara also displays the speed and explosiveness to be a true difference-maker with the ball in his hands. As a senior, Amukamara rushed for 2,106 yards and 24 touchdowns, an average of 191.5 yards per game, while catching 22 passes for 252 yards and six touchdowns. During his final two seasons at Apollo High School, Amukamara scored nearly 50 touchdowns, while rushing for 3,389 yards and averaging 11.9 yards per carry. In the same two seasons, the 6-1, 180-pounder also had 664 receiving yards receiving yards and totaled about 125 tackles, including 95 tackles and two interceptions in 2006. Amukamara was also a dangerous kickoff and punt return threat, averaging 26 yards per punt return and 20.8 yards on kickoff returns. He was honored as the state high school player of the year by the Arizona Republic newspaper, which named him a first-team Class 4A all-state pick. Amukamara is ranked as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com and the No. 12 overall prospect in the state of Arizona. He chose Nebraska over Fresno State and Arizona State.

**WHY PRINCE CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "Just the comfort level of everything I saw and experienced when I got off the plane on my official visit there. Plus, Jaivorio (Burkes) and Eric (Hagg) are two of my best friends, and they're both headed there, and I know William (Yancy) and Marcel (Jones) from playing basketball against them."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "What a talent he is. What he did on both sides of the ball in high school is impressive. He's an extraordinary athlete who has all the tools to play in the back end (of the defense). I'm still looking at him at running back too."

**APOLLO COACH ED BARNES:** "Prince is an offensive weapon that can score at any time. He can outrun 90 percent of the competition and was the best athlete on the team."

## LARRY ASANTE



**Defensive Back**  
**Alexandria, Va.**  
**[Hayfield/**  
**Coffeyville, Kan., CC]**  
**6-1/205/4.4**



**BIO:** Asante is one of six players in the 2007 Husker class to enroll at Nebraska in January. A physical and athletic defensive back prospect,

Asante is a leading contender to start at the strong safety position for the Huskers in the fall. Asante was one of the most highly regarded junior college prospects in the nation. He played linebacker for Coffeyville CC, using his speed and ball-hawking abilities to register 76 tackles, 11 tackles for loss, three blocked kicks and an interception as a redshirt freshman in 2006. His performance earned him All-Jayhawk League honors, and honorable mention All-America honors from the National Junior College Athletic Association. Asante is ranked as the No. 9 overall junior college prospect in the nation by Rivals.com, who lists him as a four-star prospect. Asante originally hails from Alexandria, Va., where he attended Hayfield High School. He starred on both sides of the ball, earning all-league honors as a running back his senior season. Asante will have three seasons of eligibility with the Huskers. He chose Nebraska over Clemson, Kansas State and Iowa State.

**WHY LARRY CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "Nebraska was one of the first schools that came after me, and that meant a lot to me. They expect me to be a great fit in their system and scheme. The coaches were also great, and I can't wait to get up there to Lincoln to be part of the spring drills and make a big impact."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "He's a big guy. He's 210 pounds. He's fast, quick and physical. He has all the attributes you look for in a big-time safety. He's an impact hitter, a collision player, and he has a lot of upside in terms of his intelligence, his savvy and his knack for the different roles that we can put him in."

**COFFEYVILLE ASSISTANT RICK CHERICO:** "To me, there isn't a better linebacker in the conference and maybe the nation. He's one of the most impressive linebacker prospects we've ever had here, and Coffeyville has a great tradition for linebackers. Shoot, this kid is the real deal."



## SHUKREE BARFIELD



**Defensive Tackle**  
**Camden, N.J.**  
**(Garden City, Kan., CC)**  
**6-4/310/4.9**



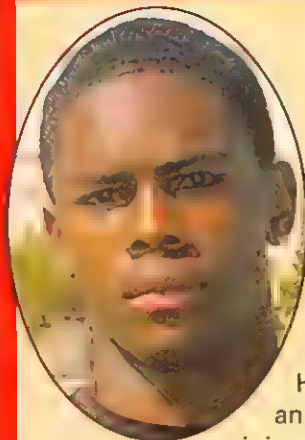
**BIO:** Barfield enrolled at Nebraska at mid-year and is one of seven players in the class who will begin on the defensive line, including Barfield's Garden City Community College teammate Kevin Dixon. A big, strong, athletic prospect at nose tackle, Barfield will be looked to in the fall to immediately bolster depth to the Husker defensive line. Barfield starred as a defensive tackle for coach J.J. Eckert at Garden City, registering 54 tackles, including five sacks and also an interception in helping his team to a 6-4 record. He also totaled more than 50 tackles and had five sacks during his freshman season in 2005. Barfield is a three-star prospect, according to Rivals.com, and was ranked as the No. 40 overall junior college prospect in the country. Barfield originally signed with Rutgers out of high school, after also visiting Kentucky and Miami (Fla). He was an all-state selection for Camden High School and had 55 tackles, seven sacks, nine tackles for loss and two interceptions during his senior season. Barfield was ranked as one of the top 20 prospects in the state of New Jersey out of high school. Garden City has produced two former Huskers — Kareem Moss and Eric Alford — who went on to play professionally. Barfield, who has two years of eligibility remaining, chose Nebraska over Louisville, South Florida and Kentucky.

**WHY SHUKREE CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I enjoyed myself down there a whole lot more than at other schools. They treated me with respect. Their coach is pretty much a legend, and I want to be coached by someone like that."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "He's a mid-term enrollee who is just a load inside. He shows good explosiveness and great ability to rush the passer. He's going to do a good job stopping the run for us."

**GARDEN CITY COACH J.J. ECKERT:** "He's going to be a guy with some amazing opportunities. Any time you're a 6-foot-3, 310-pounder that can probably run a sub-5.0 flat 40-yard dash, you're going to have an opportunity to go someplace."

## ANTHONY BLUE



**Defensive Back**  
**Cedar Hill,**  
**Texas**  
**5-10/175/4.57**



**BIO:** Blue was one of the first commitments in the Huskers' recruiting class, announcing his intention to join the Husker program last June. He's one of seven Texans in Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class, the Huskers' largest recruiting haul from the Lone Star State since 1989. Blue is a physical defensive back, combining solid coverage skills with outstanding field awareness and tackling ability. Blue was a stand-out for coach Joey McGuire at Cedar Hill High, which captured the Texas Class 5A state title in 2006 with a perfect 16-0 record. He was a second-team all-state selection, first-team all-district pick and second-team all-area in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Blue made 60 tackles and intercepted two passes as a senior, while breaking up another 20 passes. He is ranked as a three-star prospect and the nation's No. 62 safety prospect by Rivals.com. In addition to his outstanding play on the football field, Blue is a track standout for Cedar Hill, and he is expected to be among the top contenders in the 200-meter dash at the Texas state track meet. Last spring, Blue posted a time of 21.4 in the 200 meters. He chose Nebraska over Baylor, Purdue and Wisconsin, among others.

**WHY ANTHONY CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "It is the academics and academic support, and they really take care of their players. I definitely saw Nebraska as my best opportunity out of all my offers."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "Anthony Blue's dad played football with Randall Cunningham at UNLV. Anthony played on a championship team in the Dallas Metroplex and is going to be a great addition to our secondary."

**CEDAR HILL COACH JOEY MCGUIRE:** "He was a kid this past year that matched up with our opponent's best receiver. He's a very physical kid. He's one of my favorite kids ever to coach. He's going to look you in the eye and say, 'Yes sir, no sir.' He's a leader and one of our captains. I can't say enough good things about him."



## JAIVORIO BURKES



**Offensive Line**  
**Phoenix, Ariz.**  
**(Moon Valley)**  
**6-5/315/5.78**



**BIO:** Burkes is part of an impressive five-man class of recruits from the state of Arizona and one of three offensive line prospects signed by the Huskers. One of the most bally-hooed prospects in the class, Burkes earned scholarship offers from more than 60 Division I programs before choosing the Huskers. Widely regarded as one of the nation's top offensive line prospects, Burkes shows the athletic ability to play both the guard and tackle positions in college. In addition to his standout work on the offensive line, Burkes also played on the defensive line for Moon Valley and recorded eight sacks during his senior season. He was a Class 4A first-team all-state selection by the Arizona Republic. Burkes was rated four-stars and the No. 7 offensive guard prospect in the nation by Rivals.com. He was selected to play in the East Meets West All-American Game in Florida in early January. Burkes is also a starter for his high school basketball team, ranking among the state's top players and helping Moon Valley to a 16-11 record through early February. He averaged 15 points and 14 rebounds per game during his junior season. He chose Nebraska over Oklahoma, Michigan, Oregon and Arizona State.

**WHY JAIVORIO CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I just felt it was the relationship I had with the coaches and stuff like that. Coach (Bill) Busch was my favorite coach out of all of the coaches who recruited me. I just felt more comfortable with him."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "This guy is really special. He's an athletic lineman with long arms who is very light on his feet."

**MOON VALLEY COACH ROGER BRITSON:** "He has a seven-foot wing span and is one of the best athletes on our team. He's only played football for three years but has come so far already. He's a tremendous talent with NFL ability. He just needs to keep working, but every college in America who saw him offered him a scholarship."

## QUENTIN CASTILLE



**Running Back**  
**La Porte,**  
**Texas**  
**6-1/235/4.6**



**BIO:** Castille is widely regarded as one of the top power backs in the country. He's expected to contribute as a freshman in the Nebraska offense and will immediately battle returning letter-winners Marlon Lucky, Cody Glenn and Kenny Wilson for playing time at the running back position. Castille posted huge numbers for La Porte High School as a senior, rushing for more than 1,800 yards and 22 touchdowns, while averaging nearly eight yards per carry. He also showed the ability to catch the ball out of the backfield with 12 receptions and a pair of touchdowns. Castille was a second-team all state pick and a first-team all-district selection for his efforts in 2006. As a junior, he rushed for approximately 1,200 yards and 11 touchdowns (7.5 yards per carry), earning first-team all-district honors. Castille is a four-star prospect, according to Rivals.com, which lists him as the nation's No. 2 fullback prospect. Rivals also ranks Castille as the 36th-best prospect in the state of Texas and includes him among its list of the nation's top 250 overall prospects. Castille chose Nebraska over Louisville, Texas A&M and others.

**WHY QUENTIN CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I like how they use their running backs. I like that a lot. I like coach (Bill) Callahan and my position coach (Randy Jordan). I watched him in the NFL. The fans are great. I liked everything about Nebraska."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "He's a big, physical guy. When I went down there and visited with his family, I couldn't believe the size of the guy. He was 245, 250 pounds, and he looked like he was about 215. He was a big, lean guy who was extremely productive and for his size. It's uncanny the abilities he has, not only to run the ball inside but also the quickness and speed he has on the perimeter. He has good hands. This is just a tremendous back who will add needed depth."

**LA PORTE COACH JEFF LAREAU:** "Quentin is a smart young man, and he handled a lot of things that we asked him to do, and handled it well. He's a good kid that takes care of his work in the classroom and weight room."



## JARED CRICK



**Defensive End**  
**Cozad,**  
**Neb.**  
**6-6/260/4.8**



**BIO:** Crick is one of three in-state prospects in Nebraska's 2007 signing class. The Cozad native will begin his Nebraska career as a

defensive end. Crick earned sec-

ond-team all-Nebraska honors from the Omaha World-Herald and second-team Super-State honors from the Lincoln Journal Star as a senior, while earning first-team Class B honors from both papers. As a senior, Crick made 68 tackles from his defensive end position, including six tackles for loss. On offense, Crick played tight end and caught 15 passes for 284 yards and four touchdowns. During his junior season, Crick recorded 75 tackles and five sacks en route to Class C-1 all-state honors from the Omaha World-Herald. He is also a key member of the Haymaker basketball team, leading the team in scoring at 12 points per game and rebounding with eight per contest. Crick is ranked as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, who placed him as the No. 4 overall prospect in the state of Nebraska and the No. 45 strongside defensive end nationally. Crick showed his potential in the East Meets West All-American Game in Florida in January. Following the event, he was named one of the "Top 11" performers in the game. He chose Nebraska over Kansas and Iowa State.

**WHY JARED CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I was pretty set on going to Nebraska from the get-go . . . ever since they offered. When I talked to coach (Bill) Callahan one day last summer, he told me that the Husker Nation would be fired up if I just jumped on board. I knew that's where I wanted to be, so I went ahead and committed."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "I love this guy. He's an athletic, tough, physical guy in the mold of some of the Nebraska linemen of the past. We had him in camp, and he was a real force and flashed his abilities all over the field."

**COZAD COACH RON BUBAK:** "He's got great upside. We lined him up on the same side a lot with (Luke) Pinkelman, and they worked the combo block together pretty well. It was like having an extra tackle out there next to Luke."

## DEMETRIOUS DAVIS



**Defensive End**  
**St. Joseph, Mo.**  
**(Benton)**  
**6-2/285/5.22**



**BIO:** Davis is part of an impressive crop of defensive linemen in the Huskers' 2007 recruiting class. He's a big, athletic body

with outstanding quickness and the

ability to put pressure on the quarterback. The 6-2, 285-pounder comes to Lincoln from Benton High School in St. Joseph, Mo., the same high school that produced former Husker Mike Rucker, now a standout defensive end with the Carolina Panthers. As a senior, Davis helped coach Derek Wilson and Benton High to an 8-4 record and a trip to the state quarterfinals, earning Class 4A all-state honors by the Missouri High School Coaches Association. Davis was selected to play in the East Meets West All-American Game in Florida in January, teaming up with future Husker defensive teammate Jared Crick. Davis was impressive in the game, registering five tackles in the West's victory. Davis burst onto the recruiting scene after an impressive junior season in which he had 70 tackles, including 12 tackles for loss and six sacks, while also recovering a pair of fumbles. Davis is ranked as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, which also lists him as the No. 10 overall prospect in the state of Missouri and the 39th-best defensive tackle in the nation. He chose Nebraska over Alabama, Kansas State, Colorado, Iowa and Missouri.

**WHY DEMETRIOUS CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "The deciding factor was how great the coaches were. My mom loved it because it would be closer to home, and she can see every one of my games. I look forward to helping Nebraska win another national championship and get things back to the way they were."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "This is a player that we beat out Alabama and (current Nebraska assistant) Buddy Wyatt for when he was there. He's a young player that's just going to continue to get better in time."

**BENTON COACH DEREK WILSON:** "It doesn't take many plays to see how big and explosive and fast he is."



## KEVIN DIXON



**Defensive Tackle**  
**Vero Beach, Fla.**  
**(Sebring/  
 Garden City, Kan., CC)**  
**6-3/295/4.89**



**BIO:** Dixon is one of two defensive line standouts from Garden City Community College in the Huskers' 2007 signing class, joining teammate Shukree Barfield. A native of Vero Beach, Fla., Dixon is one of seven defensive line signees in this year's class and one of six players to join the Husker program from the junior college ranks. In 2006, Dixon recorded 42 tackles, eight sacks, another nine tackles for loss and forced a pair of fumbles in helping the BronxBusters to a 6-4 record. For his efforts, Dixon earned honorable-mention All-America honors from the National Junior College Athletic Association. In his first year at Garden City, Dixon racked up 34 tackles, including 22 solo stops, five sacks and seven tackles for loss. Dixon is ranked as a four-star prospect by Rivals.com and the No. 40 overall junior college recruit by the service. Before his career at Garden City CC, Dixon was a standout for Sebring High School in Vero Beach, Fla. In addition to his football accolades, Dixon was an all-county selection in basketball. Dixon and Barfield come to Nebraska from a school with past connections with the Huskers. Among the Garden City products to join the Husker program were Kareem Moss and Eric Alford, who both went on to professional careers. Dixon has two seasons of eligibility with the Huskers. He chose Nebraska over Louisville, South Florida and Texas A&M.

**WHY KEVIN CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I liked the fans, man, the fans are crazy. I like that this town is all about football. They are really, really supportive of their players and stuff like that. That was probably the biggest thing."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "We see power, size and explosiveness. It's exciting to see and we're anxious to see get them on campus. We're especially excited about Dixon playing the three-technique. We're going to put (Shukree) Barfield at the nose and Dixon at the three-technique and bring them along from there. Both these players have tremendous upside and a strong, physical presence about them."

## CURENSKI GILLEYLEN



**Wide Receiver**  
**Leander,**  
**Texas**  
**6-0/210/4.5**



**BIO:** The final piece in Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class, Gilleylen announced his intentions to join the Husker program less than two weeks before signing day. He is one of seven Texans in the Huskers' 2007 class, Nebraska's largest group of recruits from the Lone Star State since also signing seven in 1989. Gilleylen boasts an excellent combination of size and speed and is one of two highly touted wide-out prospects in the 2007 class, joining Omaha native Niles Paul. Gilleylen earned honorable-mention Texas Class 5A all-state honors as a senior. He was also a first-team All-Centex selection by the Austin American Statesman, was named to the Hill Country News' Dazzling Dozen Team, and was Leander's Outstanding Offensive Player. He helped Leander High School to a 12-3 record in 2006. Playing for coach Steve Gideon, Gilleylen totaled 30 receptions for 915 yards and nine touchdowns. He also spent some time at running back and had about 500 yards rushing with another four touchdowns on the ground. Gilleylen also posted impressive numbers as a junior, catching more than 40 passes for 850 yards and 12 touchdowns to earn all-district honors and second-team all-state accolades. Gilleylen is ranked as a three-star prospect by both Rivals.com. In addition to his impressive football credentials, Gilleylen is also a standout on the track for Leander, competing in the 100 meters and on his school's 4x100-meter relay team. On the personal side, he was a member of the People to People Student Ambassador Program and traveled to Europe based on his academics and community activities. Gilleylen was an honorable-mention academic all-state pick by the Texas High School Coaches Association. He chose Nebraska over Oklahoma State and Tennessee.

**WHY CURENSKI CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I like Nebraska because they're an up-and-coming program. I like that they're known for good athletics and academics."

**LEANDER COACH STEVE GIDEON:** "My instructions to our offensive coordinator were, 'If we want to win games, we have to get the ball to Curenski 20 to 25 times a game.'"



## ERIC HAGG



**Athlete**  
**Peoria, Ariz.**  
**(Ironwood)**  
**6-1/195/4.52**



**BIO:** One of five players in Nebraska's recruiting class from the state of Arizona, Hagg is a versatile player who could impact the Huskers at multiple positions. A product of Ironwood High School in Glendale, Ariz., Hagg is part of Nebraska's largest ever influx from Arizona, including his high school teammate and defensive end William Yancy, Glendale Apollo High School's Prince Amukamara, Phoenix Moon Valley High School's Jaivorio Burkes and Phoenix Trevor Browne High School's Marcel Jones. Hagg starred at receiver and defensive back for coach Larry Allen at Ironwood. On offense, he caught 49 passes for 920 yards and nine touchdowns, while making 33 tackles and intercepting four passes on defense. Hagg's efforts as a senior earned him first-team Arizona 5A all-state honors from the Arizona Republic. Hagg's impressive senior season came on the heels of a strong junior campaign, when he had 37 catches, including 12 touchdowns and made better than 40 tackles on defense. He also had seven interceptions and blocked a punt. Hagg is ranked as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, which also listed him as the No. 15 prospect in the state of Arizona. In addition to his outstanding accomplishments on the gridiron, Hagg is also a top basketball player, starting for his Ironwood High team. Hagg only visited Nebraska but had numerous other offers, including Arizona, Arizona State, Oregon and Oregon State.

**WHY ERIC CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "This place was so nice. The campus was so nice. Oh man, the atmosphere is crazy, and all the coaches are real nice and stuff."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "We had seven (defensive backs) sign. Overall, we're excited about the seven kids who are coming. They all have excellent potential. When I say seven, I include Eric Hagg and Prince Amukamara into that group. Those players will start at that position as they come into training camp. That's a fine group of athletes who will give us the depth and the size to help us at that particular spot."

## ROY HELU



**Running Back**  
**Danville, Calif.**  
**(San Ramon Valley)**  
**6-0/220/4.62**



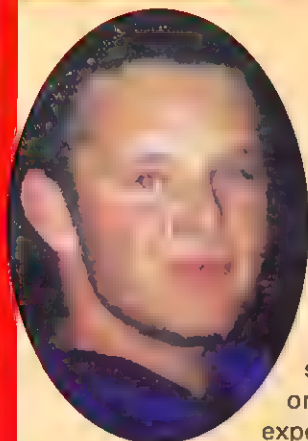
**BIO:** One of three running back prospects in the 2007 Nebraska signing class, Helu committed to Nebraska last September. Helu is one of four signees from the state of California, a group that continues Nebraska's commitment to recruiting in that state. The Huskers have signed a total of 19 players from the Golden State in their past three recruiting classes. Helu possesses good size and outstanding speed and had an impressive prep career at San Ramon Valley High for coach Dave Kravitz. Helu helped San Ramon Valley to a 10-2 record in 2006, earning first-team all-league honors at running back. He finished his senior campaign with 1,085 yards rushing and 11 touchdowns and added another 300 yards and one more score on 20 receptions. He also had one interception as a free safety. As a junior, Helu rushed for 1,526 yards and 19 scores on 186 carries during the 2005 season, good for an impressive 8.2 yards per carry average. He added 30 receptions for 500 yards and four touchdowns to earn All-East Bay League honors. Helu was also a dangerous return man for San Ramon Valley throughout his high school career. Helu is ranked as the No. 55 running back prospect in the country by Rivals.com, which ranks him as a three-star prospect. Helu only visited Nebraska, but also received offers from numerous schools, including BYU, California and Oregon.

**WHY ROY CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I just prayed about things, and I think I started favoring Nebraska when I saw their situation. They have a pro-style offense and a lot of zone blocking schemes, and I really liked their young linemen they already had in their program. I just felt that things were just set up for me to have more success there."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "Looking at the depth chart right now, we may have only one or two guys up for spring ball, as of today. I hope that situation improves. But Quentin (Castille), and also Roy Helu, will definitely add to the mix of backs, as will Marcus Mendoza."



## RYAN HILL



**Tight End**  
**Arvada, Colo.**  
**[Arvada West]**  
**6-3/230/4.7**



**BIO:** Hill is Nebraska's lone 2007 signee from the state of Colorado. He is the only player in the class expected to begin his Husker career as a tight end. Hill was an

extremely versatile player for coach Casey Coons at Arvada West High School. The past two seasons, Hill has produced big numbers from his tight end position, while also serving as the team's punter. An extremely athletic player, Hill was often split out wide as a senior and caught 42 passes for 924 yards with seven touchdown grabs. He posted similar numbers as a junior, hauling in 44 passes for nearly 900 yards and an impressive 15 touchdowns, helping his team to a 10-3 record and a state semifinal appearance. Hill was honored for his efforts at tight end, as he was named all-conference both his junior and senior years and was an all-state pick as a senior. In addition to excelling at tight end, Hill also served as Arvada West's punter the past two seasons. He averaged 42.8 yards per punt as a senior and was an All-Colorado selection as a punter. Hill is ranked as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, who also ranks him as the No. 41 tight end prospect in the country and the 13th-best prospect in Colorado. Hill's athletic accomplishments are not limited to the gridiron. He is a standout on his school's baseball team as a pitcher and third baseman and is considered a possible draft pick this June. Hill was one of Nebraska's first commitments in this year's class, and did not take any additional visits.

**WHY RYAN CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "The facilities and the academics are what really got me. You can see how much they care about academics at Nebraska, and that was important to me. It's going to be so much fun at Nebraska. The way I feel is it'll be like making and having new brothers."

**ARVADA WEST COACH CASEY COONS:** "He's really, really, athletic. He can run. He's a big kid. He can catch. He's a good golfer. He's one of those kids who are just athletes and whatever they try, they can do well. He's that kind of kid who's a real natural athlete."

## MARCEL JONES



**Offensive Line**  
**Phoenix, Ariz.**  
**[Trevor Browne]**  
**6-7/300/5.3**



**BIO:** Jones is the tallest member of Nebraska's recruiting class. Jones is part of an impressive group of prep standouts joining the Nebraska program from the state

of Arizona. Jones is a raw talent who had an outstanding senior year on the offensive line for coach Randy Ricedorff at Trevor Browne High School. Jones missed his junior year because of injury, but earned honorable-mention Arizona 5A all-state honors as a senior. Jones is ranked as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, which lists him as the 13th-best overall prospect in Arizona. Jones is also a standout on the basketball court for Trevor Browne High. He is the starting center for a team that had a 20-2 record and was ranked in the top 10 in Class 5A through early February. Jones averages about 12 points and eight rebounds per contest. As a junior, he earned all-region honors for his basketball performance. Jones is also a star in the classroom, ranking in the top 20 of his senior class of more than 500 students. Jones chose Nebraska over Arizona State.

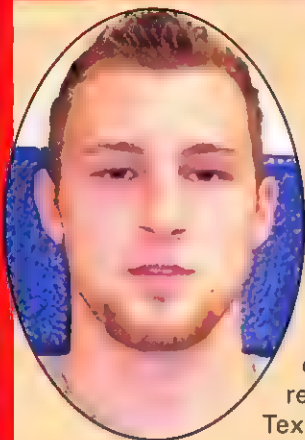
**WHY MARCEL CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I really like how Nebraska takes care of their players and makes sure they are taking care of things academically. Plus, I really like the small town atmosphere of Lincoln. It's a little bit more of a calm surrounding."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "The other guy down there in Phoenix, Marcel Jones, he's a big body too, about 6-7 and he's about 305 pounds and he looks like he's 285. He's so athletic. Great basketball player. I know our people over here were excited about him as a basketball prospect. That's how good he is. He brings a lot of athleticism and size. That's what we look for. You can't have enough of those type of players."

**TREVOR BROWNE COACH RANDY RICE-DORFF:** "Marcel Jones is a guy with tremendous integrity. He's a quality person. Around here, you've got guys like him who might walk around with attitude and arrogance. But that's not Marcel at all."



## ADI KUNALIC



**Kicker**  
**Fort Worth, Texas**  
**(North Crowley)**  
**6-0/175/4.67**



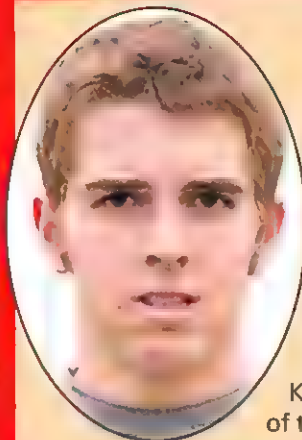
**BIO:** Place-kicker Kunalic is part of an impressive class of seven Husker recruits from the state of Texas, the Huskers' largest haul from the Lone Star State since 1989. Kunalic is the only kicker in Nebraska's class and comes to the Huskers after an impressive prep career for coach Mike Papas at North Crowley High School in Fort Worth. Kunalic attempted just six field goals as a senior for a 3-7 North Crowley team, and connected on four of those attempts. He also nailed 29-of-31 extra-point attempts. Kunalic owns a powerful leg, which allowed him to boot 22 kickoffs for touchbacks during his senior season. Kunalic also served as the team's punter and averaged nearly 40 yards on 46 punts, with a season long punt of 72 yards. As a junior, Kunalic had more place-kicking opportunities for a 9-2 North Crowley squad. He connected on 7-of-9 field goal attempts, including a pair of field goals from better than 50 yards. Kunalic is ranked among the top 20 kickers in the country according to Rivals.com and is listed as a two-star prospect. Kunalic chose Nebraska after also taking a visit to Washington State. He also received offers from Miami, Kansas and Utah, among others.

**WHY ADI CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I expected a lot because it's a big, traditional football school, and I got to see everything I wanted. All the guys were great. They were really cool guys, and I got to meet all the coaches."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "Adi's an interesting guy. He's interesting in every respect — his nationality, where he's come from, the hardships he's endured — what he's overcome in his own personal life to get to where he's at right now. He's a strong-legged guy as a kicker. He loves to compete. He loves to practice. He loves the challenges. He's a tough guy for a kicker. You don't see guys like that. He's competitive. He's just fun to be around."

**NORTH CROWLEY COACH MIKE PAPAS:** "He's just blessed with a really strong leg. We'd love to say it's something we did for him that made him that way, but he came to us with that. We just tried to coach him the best we could."

## BLAKE LAWRENCE



**Linebacker**  
**Overland Park, Kan.**  
**(Shawnee Mission**  
**West)**  
**6-2/200/4.65**



**BIO:** Lawrence was named the Gatorade Kansas High School Player of the Year after an impressive senior season for coach Tim Callaghan. Lawrence was a dominant two-way player at Shawnee Mission West, starting at quarterback as a senior, while continuing as a defensive standout. On defense, Lawrence played both safety and linebacker and had 60 tackles, a pair of sacks and three interceptions. On offense, Lawrence completed 68-of-131 passes for 1,329 yards and 15 touchdowns, while throwing just three interceptions. Lawrence was also a running threat, picking up 483 yards on 71 carries, while reaching the end zone 15 times on the ground. His performance led Shawnee Mission West to the state Class 6A title game. In addition to his Gatorade Player-of-the-Year honors, Lawrence earned all-state and All-Metro honors from the Kansas City Star. Lawrence is ranked as a four-star prospect by Rivals.com and is listed as the top overall recruit in the state of Kansas. Rivals also ranks him as the nation's No. 18 outside linebacker prospect. As a junior, Lawrence served as the backup quarterback for his older brother, Tyler, and starred on defense. Blake tallied 90 tackles, including 13 tackles for loss, while recording four sacks and forcing four fumbles. For his efforts, the top-notch linebacker received all-conference, all-county, all-metro and all-state honors. Lawrence is also one of the top scholars at his school, maintaining better than 4.0 cumulative grade-point average. Lawrence received numerous scholarship offers and chose the Huskers after also visiting Kansas. He also turned down offers from Arizona State, Colorado, Kansas State, Michigan State and Texas Tech.

**WHY BLAKE CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "It came down to going where the heart is. That is something coach Cos (Kevin Cosgrove) told me the whole time, and I agree with him. No matter what the facilities are and who is surrounding you, when it is inside of you, you have to go with it."

**SHAWNEE MISSION WEST COACH TIM CALLAGHAN:** "He's a smart kid who has a real sense for the game and knows to get to the ball-carrier in a hurry."



## ZAC LEE



**Quarterback**  
**San Francisco, Calif.**  
**(St. Ignatius Prep/  
San Francisco CC)**  
**6-2/205/4.6**



**BIO:** Lee is one of two quarterbacks and one of six junior college players in the class. Lee, who enrolled at mid-year, is expected to chal-

lenge for immediate playing time. He joins the Huskers after one season at San Francisco City College, which produced NU wide receiver Maurice Purify. Lee had a standout 2006 season, passing for more than 3,400 yards and 35 touchdowns while completing 64 percent of his passes. The San Francisco CC offense averaged nearly 40 points per game under the direction of Lee, who sat out 2005, giving him four seasons to use three years of eligibility at Nebraska. Lee is ranked as the nation's top junior college quarterback (four-stars), according to Rivals.com and the No. 10 junior college prospect overall. He was a three-year all-league quarterback at St. Ignatius College Prep in San Francisco. He chose Nebraska after also receiving strong recruiting interest from Oklahoma, Fresno State and Mississippi State. His father, Bob Lee, played quarterback for 12 seasons in the NFL from 1969 to 1980.

**WHY ZAC CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "When I visited, there really wasn't anything I didn't like. Nebraska obviously has a tremendous record with academic All-Americans and all that. My parents and I are all real happy about the decision."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "Zac Lee's lineage, as we all know, his dad played professional football and is just a wonderful guy, and of course Zac is just a tremendous competitor. You watch him run with the ball and make plays with his legs and throw it, I think he has a rope for an arm. He probably has one of the best releases I've seen in a while, out of the guys that we've had. He's accurate, he's played in the pass system and understands the passing game and understands how to manage a game from the quarterback position."

**CITY COLLEGE COACH GEORGE RUSH:** "Zac has great leadership skills and fabulous arm strength. He manages the game well, he knows when to check in and out of plays, and he's an excellent team guy. I think Nebraska has someone who'll be a difference-maker in the next few years."

## MARCUS MENDOZA



**Running Back**  
**Houston, Texas**  
**(Spring Woods)**  
**5-10/175/4.4**



**BIO:** A speedy running back and return specialist, Mendoza is one of two high school prospects (also Patrick Witt) who graduated from high school at mid-year

and enrolled at Nebraska in January. Mendoza is also one of seven members of the Huskers' 2007 signing class who come from Texas.

Mendoza posted impressive rushing numbers for Spring Woods High School in Houston. As a senior, he totaled approximately 700 rushing yards and seven touchdowns, while also catching 20 passes for better than 250 yards and another four scores. The 5-10, 175-pound Mendoza was also a dangerous return threat for coach Dwayne Eggerman. As a junior, Mendoza missed three games, but still earned second-team all-district honors after rushing for better than 650 yards and 10 touchdowns. Mendoza is a four-star prospect according to Rivals.com, which also ranks him as the nation's No. 12 all-purpose back and the No. 65 overall prospect in the state of Texas. Mendoza is also a standout on the track, clocking times of 10.64 seconds in the 100 and 21.6 in the 200 meters as a junior. Mendoza chose Nebraska after also visiting Oklahoma State and Texas Tech.

**WHY MARCUS CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I just felt real comfortable at Nebraska. I really like the school and they were talking to me about how they really wanted me."

**ON ENROLLING EARLY:** "It was definitely the right approach. I love it here, and Patrick (Witt) and I are having a blast. I don't mind the weather at all. We're having a great time with everything and there's nothing I'd change."

**SPRING WOODS COACH DWAYNE EGGERMAN:** "Nebraska saw him as a very versatile guy who they can move around a lot, put him in slots and maybe early in his career make him a specialty type back as a kick returner and those kinds of things. He's 184 pounds right now, but he'll put on another 15 pounds when he gets there. What he can do with overall speed, you can't teach somebody to run fast. They're looking for a guy they can do some stuff with. He's a legitimate threat to take it all the way home in the open field."



## TERRENCE MOORE



**Defensive Tackle**  
**New Orleans, La.**  
**(McDonogh 35)**  
**6-3/275/5.19**



**BIO:** Moore is part of an impressive group of defensive line signees. Moore is Nebraska's first signee from the Louisiana prep ranks since the 2002 Husker signing class. He was an impact performer for McDonogh 35 Senior High School in New Orleans in 2006. Moore comes to Nebraska from the same high school as former Husker star and NFL All-Pro defensive lineman Neil Smith. Moore totaled 81 tackles, including 31 tackles for loss, 14 sacks and a pair of fumble recoveries as a senior. His performance earned him first-team New Orleans all-metro honors and first-team all-district honors. Moore helped coach Wayne Reese and McDonogh 35 to a 7-3 record and a trip to the second round of the Louisiana 4A state playoffs. He returned to New Orleans this past summer after being displaced to Spring, Texas, in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina. Moore was able to play in only a handful of games in 2005 after arriving in Spring, but remained on the recruiting radar of numerous schools. Moore is ranked as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, which ranks him as the nation's No. 41 defensive tackle prospect and the No. 22 overall prospect in Louisiana. Moore only visited Nebraska, but received strong recruiting interest from Alabama, Missouri, Oklahoma State and Tulane, among others.

**WHY TERRENCE CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I knew Nebraska was the place for me once I got up there. As it turned out, the hospitality of the people and the academics are just what I was looking for in a school. After seeing and experiencing what I did while I was there, the decision to commit was an easy decision for me to make. There are lots of D-1 schools out there, but my main focus is academics, and at Nebraska they're a step above all the others."

**MCDONOGH 35 COACH WAYNE REESE:** "I think he is as good a player as there is in this area. All of his football is ahead of him. He only began playing in the ninth grade. We found him at school and asked him why he was not playing. He said he didn't know the coach. So I called him over and met him. You will not find a harder working kid."

## ARMANDO MURILLO



**Defensive Back**  
**Tampa, Fla.**  
**(Robinson/**  
**Eastern Arizona CC)**  
**6-0/195/4.4**



**BIO:** Junior college standout Murillo is a key part of an impressive group of six players recruited to play defensive back for the Huskers. A mid-year enrollee with three years to complete two seasons of eligibility, Murillo brings good size and excellent speed and coverage skills to the NU secondary. HE joins the Huskers after a standout two-year stint at Eastern Arizona Community College in Thatcher, Ariz., where he was coached by John O'Mera, who also coached current Husker Zackary Bowman at New Mexico Military Institute. Murillo helped Eastern Arizona to a 7-4 mark in 2006 by intercepting three passes and making about 30 tackles, while teams generally threw to the other side of the field. In his first season at Eastern Arizona in 2005, Murillo earned first-team All-America honors from the National Junior College Athletic Association after recording seven interceptions, including two that he returned for touchdowns. He is regarded as a four-star prospect by Rivals.com, who also ranks him as the nation's No. 21 overall junior college recruit. Murillo was a standout wide receiver and defensive back at Robinson High in Tampa, before enrolling at Eastern Arizona. Murillo is a cousin of NBA star Gilbert Arenas. He chose Nebraska over Oklahoma and Louisville, among others.

**WHY ARMANDO CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "It was just because of the school, coaches, players . . . just everything fit together. I knew where I was going. They have the total package. It's what I was looking for."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "Armando played for John O'Mera, who also coached Zack Bowman. When you watch him on film, you see a lot of similarities to Zack. He's just an outstanding player."

**EASTERN COLLEGE COACH JOHN O'MERA:** "People knew about him and didn't even try to throw at him in games. Every time they tried him, he either knocked it down or intercepted it. They just didn't test him after that. He knows how to go up and get it."



## NILES PAUL



**Wide Receiver**  
**Omaha, Neb.**  
**(Omaha North)**  
**6-1/210/4.4**



**BIO:** One of three in-state recruits, Paul is NU's first scholarship signee from Omaha North since receiver Wilson Thomas in 1998. He is the nephew of former Husker great and current

Green Bay Packer running back Ahman Green. Last fall, Paul hauled in 46 passes for 814 yards and 13 touchdowns at Omaha North. He averaged nearly 18 yards per reception and averaged better than 18 yards per punt return. Paul's performance helped North to a 9-2 record and the Class A state quarterfinals. Paul was one of 58 players nationally who were selected as a Parade All-American. Paul excelled as a junior for North, when he averaged 19.5 yards on 32 receptions and caught 10 touchdown passes. He also averaged 25.6 yards per kickoff return as a junior. Rivals.com ranks Paul as the top overall prospect in the state, the No. 10 receiver recruit in the country and the 73rd-best overall prospect nationally. Paul was the only Husker signee to play in the U.S. Army All-American Game in San Antonio, and was the leading receiver for the West team. Paul is a multi-sport star. Last spring, he led the Vikings to the Class A state track title by winning four gold medals. Individually, he captured the Class A titles in the 110- and 300-meter hurdles and was part of gold medal teams in the 4x100 and 4x400-meter relays. On the basketball court, Paul is among the Class A leaders in scoring at 19.0 points per game and leads the state in rebounding at better than 11 boards per contest.

**WHY NILES CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "The best thing is, you can have goals as an individual, but when a player hits that field, it's all about the team. That's how Nebraska plays; as a team and they never give up."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "He's very focused. He wants to be the best. What's unique about Niles is that he knows exactly what he wants, and that shows tremendous focus. For an individual to be that locked in to what he wants and where he wants to go in life, I have a lot of respect for that."

**NORTH HEAD COACH LARRY MARTIN:** "At times we had trouble running, and he stayed patient and ran his routes. There was a lot of pressure to perform at a high level."

## AARON SCHULTE



**Offensive Line**  
**Norfolk, Neb.**  
**(Norfolk Catholic)**  
**6-6/320/5.2**



**BIO:** One of three in-state prospects in Nebraska's 2007 signing class, Schulte is expected to delay his enrollment at Nebraska until January of 2008, and join the Husker program at that

time. Schulte was a standout performer for Norfolk Catholic High School, helping Jeff Bellar's team to a 9-3 record and a trip to the Class C-1 state semifinals. Schulte played on both the offensive and defensive lines for the Knights. His performance earned him first-team Class C-1 all-state honors from both the Lincoln Journal Star and the Omaha World-Herald. He also dominated on the offensive line as a sophomore and junior, helping Norfolk Catholic to back-to-back state titles and a 25-1 combined record in 2004 and 2005. Schulte earned first-team Class C-1 all-state honors as a junior. He is regarded as a two-star prospect by Rivals.com, which also lists Schulte as the No. 9 player in the state of Nebraska. Schulte was a late addition to Nebraska's class, but did receive strong interest from several other schools, including Kansas, Iowa State and Colorado State.

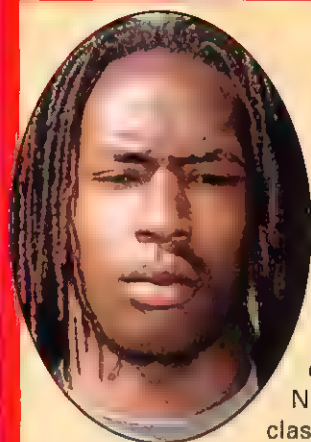
**WHY AARON CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "I just liked it down there. I like the atmosphere, and I like the coaches a lot."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "We're looking at the potential of grayshirting him, so this is a great opportunity for Aaron to come to Nebraska and be a part of this class and also to extend his eligibility as well. We've had great discussions with his family in terms of how we want to treat his processes, and there's been great communication and dialogue since day one. I'm very confident that he'll do a great job. He's a good kid. He's one of those big statured Nebraska linemen that you look for, and he's complemented with those two other tackles as well Marcel Jones and Jaivorio Burkes. All three of these guys are what you look for in offensive linemen these days."

**NORFOLK CATHOLIC HEAD COACH JEFF BELLAR:** "He just moves real well for someone 6-foot-6 and 320 pounds. He was a good leader for us."



## AUSTIN STAFFORD



**Linebacker**  
**Hayward,**  
**Calif.**  
**6-2/205/4.5**



**BIO:** Stafford is part of an impressive influx of defensive talent in Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class. He is one of four signees

from California in this year's class,

continuing Nebraska's commitment to recruiting the Golden State. Stafford played defensive end for coach Casey Moreno at Hayward High School but projects to linebacker on the collegiate level. Stafford had a dominant senior season, helping Hayward to a 12-2 record by recording 14 sacks and better than 80 tackles. He was a first-team all-league selection for his performance. As a junior defensive end, Stafford posted impressive numbers, accounting for 83 tackles, 12 tackles for loss, 10 sacks and two fumble recoveries. He also earned first-team all-league honors as a junior. Stafford is a three-star prospect, according to Rivals.com, which lists him as the No. 26 outside linebacker prospect in the country and the 45th-ranked overall player in the state of California. Stafford is also a starter on Hayward's basketball team. He took his lone visit to Nebraska but also received strong recruiting interest from Utah and San Diego State, among others.

**WHY AUSTIN CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "When I visited Nebraska, I was impressed with their facilities. I felt very comfortable in the environment that they put me in. I felt that everybody — the players and the coaches — got along well with each other and were very friendly and welcoming. It felt like a family. Nebraska was there from the very start with me and showed me that they were really interested in me and wanted me. My parents probably would have preferred that I didn't travel so far away to college, but they support my decision and like Nebraska."

**HAYWARD COACH CASEY MORENO:** "He has huge upside. He's 6-foot-3 and 210 pounds, but he'll probably get up to 225-235 pounds easy. He has the frame that allows for that. He plays power forward for the basketball team. He has great hips and acceleration. He's very fast, and he dunks a basketball. Austin is a very low-key player. But at the same time he is very upbeat. He is usually very relaxed and helps keep the team loose."

## SHAWN SULLIVAN



**Defensive Back**  
**Brenham,**  
**Texas**  
**5-10/190/4.4**



**BIO:** Sullivan is part of an impressive group of defensive back recruits and part of large influx of players from the state of Texas in

Nebraska's 2007 class. He is also

one of seven signees from the Lone Star State, Nebraska's largest group of players from that state since also signing seven in 1989. Sullivan was one of the first players to commit to Nebraska, pledging his intention last June. Sullivan was a standout two-way performer for coach Glen West at Brenham High School. He helped the Cubs to the third round of the Class 4A state playoffs and a 12-2 record in 2006. Sullivan earned all-district honors for his defensive work, where he showed his versatility by often lining up at outside linebacker. He finished the year as one of the team's top tacklers, while registering five sacks and four interceptions. On offense, Sullivan played wideout for most of the season and scored three touchdowns, but also served as a running back in Brenham's state playoff run. Sullivan was an all-district and all-conference selection as a junior, when he recorded 43 tackles, seven tackles for loss and four interceptions. Sullivan is listed as the No. 89 player on the Dallas Morning News' Texas Top 100, while Rivals.com lists him as a three-star prospect and the 43rd-ranked cornerback in the country. Sullivan boasts outstanding speed and is planning to participate in sprints for the track team this spring, after posting a personal best of 10.6 in the 100 meters last year. Sullivan only visited Nebraska, but also received offers from TCU, Wisconsin, Oklahoma State and Colorado, among others.

**WHY SHAWN CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "The visit went great. The highlight was going around and seeing everything. The new facilities were great. There wasn't anything I didn't like. Since I was real little I've been a fan of Nebraska. I always liked the players at Nebraska. My favorite was probably Eric Crouch."

**BRENNHAM COACH GLEN WEST:** "We think he has a chance to be really good. He moves really well and is good against the run. Shawn will run in the high 4.4s consistently. He is also close to being a 300-pound bench presser."



## JOSEPH TOWNSEND



**Defensive Tackle**  
**San Jose, Calif.**  
**(Valley Christian/  
 Foothill CC)**  
**6-3/285/4.87**



**BIO:** California native Townsend is one of five players in the class set to line up on the interior defensive front. He is also one of a group of six players to join the Huskers from the junior college ranks and one of four Californians in the class. Nebraska continues to make California one of its key recruiting priorities, as the Huskers have signed 19 players from the Golden State over the past three seasons. Townsend is coming off a stand-out campaign for coach Marshall Sperbeck at Foothill (Calif.) Community College. Townsend was a first-team all-league pick in the Northern California Conference in 2006, helping Foothill to a 10-1 record and a victory in the Silicon Valley Bowl. With most teams staying away from his side of the field, Townsend registered approximately 30 tackles, eight tackles for loss, four sacks, 10 hurries and a fumble recovery. Townsend is ranked as a four-star prospect by Rivals.com, which ranks him as the nation's No. 40 overall junior college recruit. Townsend played both ways as a prep at Valley Christian High School in San Jose. He was mainly recruited as an offensive tackle out of high school. Townsend only visited Nebraska, but Washington State, Arizona State and Mississippi State were among other schools vying for his services. Townsend sat out the 2005 season, and will have four years to complete three seasons of eligibility at Nebraska. Townsend's older brother, Larry Jr., lettered for the Huskers as a defensive tackle for Nebraska's national championship teams in 1994 and 1995.

**WHY JOSEPH CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "The opportunity to get to the NFL and the 94-percent graduation rate and the academic all-Americans. That is what sold me."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "Defensive line is a position that it's so tough and so hard to compete for great players . . . You just can't have enough of them. They're hard to find, and when you've got a chance to get one, you've got to grab them."

## LATRAVIS WASHINGTON



**Defensive Back**  
**Bradenton, Fla.**  
**(Bayshore)**  
**6-3/210/4.55**



**BIO:** Washington brings outstanding size and speed to the Husker secondary. Washington is also one of three native Floridians in this class, but is the only Florida high school signee. Washington is the cousin of former Nebraska cornerback Fabian Washington, who was a first-round draft pick of the Oakland Raiders in 2005. Latravis Washington was a two-way standout for Bayshore High School in Bradenton, Fla., attracting recruiting interest both as a defender and a quarterback. As a senior, Washington split time on defense between the secondary and defensive end, finishing the year with five sacks, in addition to ranking as one of his team's top tacklers. Washington also started at quarterback for coach Raymond Woodie, and accounted for six passing touchdowns and six rushing touchdowns. Washington also had an excellent junior season, in which he threw for 600 yards and four touchdowns and ran for 800 yards and nine scores. He also lines up as the starting power forward for Bayshore's basketball team. In addition to his association with the Huskers through his cousin, Washington attended Nebraska's Elite Quarterback Academy in both 2005 and 2006. Washington is regarded as a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, who lists him as the nation's No. 39 safety prospect and the 65th-best player in the state of Florida. In addition to attending the same high school as Fabian Washington, Latravis also hails from the same hometown as former Husker quarterback Tommie Frazier. Washington chose Nebraska over Ohio State and West Virginia.

**WHY LATRAVIS CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "That's what I like . . . no distractions. I also love the city of Lincoln. They enjoy their football there. Its not like the state of Florida where every person roots for a different team. Everybody in Nebraska loves the Cornhuskers."

**BAYSHORE COACH JEAN GORDON:** "Latravis is a kid that any coach would want. He is a very down to earth kid that will do anything to help the team. If you want him to play anywhere on the field he will do it. He is just a competitor to the fullest extent."



## PATRICK WITT



### Quarterback

Wylie,

Texas

6-4/215/4.75



**BIO:** Strong-armed quarterback Witt is one of two signal callers in the 2007 recruiting class, and one of two high school standouts to enroll at Nebraska in January.

Witt is also one of eight Texans in the class, representing Nebraska's largest recruiting success in the state since at least 1973. Witt played his senior season at Wylie (Texas) High School after moving from Georgia following his junior season. He threw for 1,846 yards and 17 touchdowns as a senior, while completing 57 percent of his pass attempts. He also ran for more than 330 yards and four touchdowns. Wylie fell just one win shy of the state playoffs, and Witt was the team's MVP, while being selected as an all-district and all-region selection. Witt completed 63 percent of his passes for more than 1,000 yards and 12 touchdowns as a junior at Parkview High School in Lilburn, Ga. He also rushed for 250 yards and 15 touchdowns as a junior. Rivals.com ranks Witt as a three-star prospect, the No. 18 pro-style quarterback in the nation and the No. 84 prospect in the state of Texas. He also received strong recruiting interest from Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Oklahoma, among others.

**WHY PATRICK CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "The whole experience was awesome, and the atmosphere was amazing. I'd give it a '10' on a scale of 1-10. It was great. It exceeded all my expectations. We went around all the new facilities now that they've moved in. They're unbelievable."

**BILL CALLAHAN:** "Patrick is eager. He's smart, He's intelligent. I look at his makeup, and he reminds me a lot of (Zac) Taylor in that regard. He's smart, he's tough, and he's dependable and we know what that's done around here for the past few years. He kind of exemplifies that; he exudes that in his personality and also in his performance."

**WYLIE COACH BILL HOWARD:** "He is a very coachable young man and he is very, very smart. His potential is almost unlimited because he is smart and has all of the God-given ability. The head coach at Nebraska must be doing something right, as Patrick was really impressed by the head coach."

## WILLIAM YANCY



### Defensive End

Glendale, Ariz.

(Ironwood)

6-4/230/4.7



**BIO:** Defensive end Yancy is part of an impressive recruiting haul by Nebraska in the state of Arizona. The Huskers inked five prep standouts from the Grand Canyon state, NU's largest

ever recruiting influx from Arizona. Yancy is joined in the class by his Ironwood High School teammate Eric Hagg. Yancy is also one of seven players in the 2007 class who are slated to begin their careers on the defensive front, and is one of two defensive ends in the class. Yancy helped Ironwood and coach Larry Allen to a 7-4 record in 2006 by registering 32 tackles and seven sacks from his strongside defensive end position. For his efforts, Yancy earned honorable-mention Class 5A all-state honors from the Arizona Republic. He earned all-region honors as a junior when he racked up 66 tackles and 11 sacks while playing the weakside defensive end spot. Yancy participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl in Florida following his senior season. He is ranked as a four-star prospect by Rivals.com, which lists him as the No. 4 overall prospect in Arizona and the 19th-best strongside defensive end prospect nationally. Yancy is also a standout on Ironwood's basketball team. He splits time starting between center and power forward and had helped his team to a 14-4 record through late January. He averages double figures in rebounds and leads his team with four blocked shots per game. Yancy chose Nebraska after also taking to Arizona State and Purdue and turning down an offer from Oklahoma.

**WHY WILLIAM CHOSE NEBRASKA:** "The people in Nebraska are so personable, from the coaches to the players to the fans. Everybody in Nebraska supports the football team. That's the most impressive thing to me. "Just being comfortable with everything. With the players, coaches, academics, surroundings, my grades, the relationships, and the whole lifestyle all fell into place for me. It will be a second home for me, so I wanted to be comfortable with all that."

**IRONWOOD HEAD COACH LARRY ALLEN:** "He runs a 4.7 (40-yard dash), and he has great feet and a large arm span. He's also an excellent 3.50 (grade point average) student."



# Defensive Focus

**Several players  
in 2007 class  
could contribute  
immediately**

**By Rick Shaw**

**I**n late January, the Nebraska football team capped off its 2007 recruiting efforts with the commitment of blue-chip receiver, Curenski Gilleylen, of Leander, Texas. Gilleylen proved to be the final piece to a 27 member Husker recruiting class, ranked among the nation's finest by most recruiting publications. Rivals.com tagged NU's 2007 recruiting class as the 13th best in the country.

The class saw some high profile late defections, including cornerback David Ross to Oregon State, linebacker Travis Lewis to Oklahoma and defensive tackle Chris Perry to Miami. In the end, however, the class met all of Nebraska's immediate needs and ranked among head coach Bill Callahan's best recruiting efforts since arriving in Lincoln.

The 2006 Husker squad lost six defensive starters to graduation, including the entire defensive line. In addition, depth at defensive back was slim, at best, in 2006. In order to compliment, a potentially dominant offense heading in to 2007, it was vital that NU restocked its defensive ranks with some potential difference-makers.

The Huskers brought in a good blend of high school and junior college athletes, many of whom will battle for starting spots and playing time as soon as they arrive on campus. Out of 28 signees, 16 are slated to begin their Husker careers on the defensive side of the ball.

One player who is expected to make an early run for a starting spot in 2007 is strong safety Larry Asante, out of Coffeyville, Kan., Community College. Rated the No. 9 junior college player in the country (four stars) by Rivals.com, the 6-foot-1, 205-pound Asante said he expects to earn a Blackshirt by the time fall practice drills kick off in August.

"The coaches think I can be a guy that sees the field right away for them," Asante said. "I'm going to work hard to make sure that I live up to what the Blackshirt

**RIVALS.COM**

**2007 TEAM**

**RANKINGS**

## Top 25

School	Points
1. Florida	2,951
2. Southern Cal	2,761
3. Tennessee	2,726
4. LSU	2,695
5. Texas	2,562
6. South Carolina	2,190
7. Auburn	2,013
8. Notre Dame	1,932
9. Georgia	1,895
10. Alabama	1,790
11. Oregon	1,760
12. Michigan	1,750
<b>13. Nebraska</b>	<b>1,734</b>
14. Oklahoma	1,718
15. Ohio State	1,577
16. North Carolina	1,542
17. Illinois	1,509
18. Miami, Fla.	1,471
19. Florida State	1,464
20. Georgia Tech	1,453
21. Clemson	1,436
22. California	1,405
23. Penn State	1,305
24. Virginia	1,267
25. Pittsburgh	1,265

## Other Big 12

28. Oklahoma St.	1,165
31. Colorado	1,081
32. Missouri	1,059
39. Kansas State	873
42. Texas A&M	829
49. Texas Tech	585
51. Kansas	491
59. Iowa State	343
61. Baylor	286

defense expects. I can't wait to carry on the tradition."

As a linebacker in 2006, Asante led Coffeyville in tackles with 76, and added 11 tackles for loss, three blocked kicks and one interception. Coffeyville assistant Rico Cherico said that the Huskers are getting a real difference-maker in Asante.

"To me, there isn't a better linebacker in the conference and maybe the nation," Cherico said. "He's one of the most impressive linebacker prospects that we've ever had here. Shoot, this kid is the real deal."

Asante, who is already enrolled at Nebraska, picked the Huskers over Clemson and Kansas State.

Another player who will be counted on to contribute immediately is defensive tackle Kevin Dixon of Garden City, Kan., CC. The 6-3, 292-pound lineman ranks as the No. 36 junior college player (four stars) by Rivals.com.

Possessing outstanding strength (380-pound bench press/490-pound squat) in addition to good quickness (4.89-second 40-yard dash), Dixon garnered 34 tackles (22 solos) in 2006, including two tackles for loss, and five sacks.

"Kevin is a very, very explosive individual," Garden City coach J.J. Eckert said. "He has got a hot motor. I mean, he really likes to get to the football, and he is very explosive off of the football. He can bring a lot to the table that you don't find a lot of in the normal defensive lineman. He is a dominant, dominant guy that can cause a lot of problems with offenses."

Dixon, who chose Nebraska over offers from Louisville and South Florida, will have three years to play two remaining seasons of eligibility. He'll be joined in on the defensive line in Lincoln by his Garden City teammate, 6-4, 310-pounder Shukree Barfield.

Barfield, ranked the No. 40 junior college prospect, chose the Huskers over offers from Louisville, Rutgers, Kentucky and others. Last year at

Garden City, he tallied 54 tackles, five sacks and one interception.

"Shukree is a really good football player . . . really good football player," Eckert said. "I think he has matured a lot. He has learned how to get into the weight room and to improve his skills in doing that. He has got a good motor."

Barfield, who is already enrolled at Nebraska, will participate in spring drills. Barfield and Dixon will both be



## RECRUITING NOTES

# Late Visit a Success

By Sean Stevens

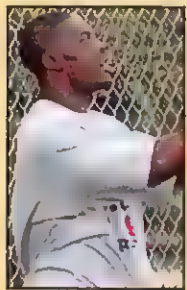
**N**ebbraska came into this recruiting cycle looking to sign two wide receivers. Last summer, coach Callahan's staff received a commitment from Omaha North's Niles Paul, a Rivals.com four-star recruit. While Paul has good speed, he has been thought to be more of a "possession" receiver. That being the case, the Husker coaches had been searching for more of a downfield "speed" threat.

A number of targets were identified, and many of them were recruited throughout the entire cycle. In fact, Nebraska received an oral commitment from Butler, Kan., Community College's Wallace Franklin in December. If that name sounds familiar to you, it should. Franklin was a member of the 2005 Nebraska recruiting class and was placed at Butler by NU.

The Huskers later rescinded Franklin's 2007 scholarship offer when they learned that he was unlikely to qualify academically, and Franklin committed to Iowa State. He signed with the Cyclones, but only time will tell if he ever plays on a Big 12 football field.

Another possibility was Lionel Breaux of New Orleans, who visited Lincoln in January while committed to Ole Miss. Breaux was impressed with Nebraska, but in the end he stayed in the south.

Hubert Anyiam from Garland, Texas, was a player on the minds of Husker recruiting fanatics throughout the year. Anyiam leaned toward Nebraska after his visit in late October, but wanted to come to Nebraska with his high school teammate, linebacker Jermaine Love. NU was full at the linebacker spot, so Anyiam chose Oklahoma State.



Curenski Gilleylen

In the end, Nebraska got the guy who was atop their recruiting board in Curenski Gilleylen of Leander, Texas. Although he was the last to visit, he was the most highly sought of the prospects. After prior visits to Purdue and Tennessee, Gilleylen finally came to Lincoln in late January. Before his visit, he explained why he was so late getting to Lincoln.

"Actually, I've been wanting to visit Nebraska for awhile now," he said. "Because of all that was going on with our season and the holidays, though, I just couldn't get it scheduled before Christmas . . ."

After the trip to Lincoln, the 6-foot, 210-pound Gilleylen went home to discuss things with his family. His choice came down to Nebraska, Tennessee, and Oklahoma State, with Miami and Florida also making late contact.

Gilleylen's father, Clarzell Gilleylen, explained what tipped the scales in Nebraska's favor.

"We weighed all of our odds. Tennessee is a great school, and Oklahoma State is building. Nebraska is already there. They have won the Big 12 North and they have just got a few pieces to fill," he said.

Gilleylen is also a well-rounded individual according to his high school coach.

"He takes Advanced Placement classes and is really and truly a recruiter's dream," said coach Kelly Broussard. "He's a great kid from a great family who's fully qualified . . . I think he's a better person than he is football player, if that's possible." ■

depended upon to help plug the holes left in the interior defensive line by 2006 starters Ola Dagunduro and Barry Cryer.

Another four-star junior college transfer that should battle for an immediate spot in the starting lineup is cornerback Armando Murillo out of Eastern Arizona CC. in Thatcher, Ariz.. Ranked as the No. 21 junior college player, Murillo chose Nebraska over scholarship offers from West Virginia, Arizona State, Kansas, Oklahoma, Louisville, Michigan State and many others.

Murillo grabbed three interceptions in 2006 after snagging seven as a freshman in 2005. Eastern Arizona coach John O'Mera said that Murillo's statistics would have been more impressive had opposing teams actually threw to his side of the field.

"People knew about him and didn't even try to throw at him in games," O'Mera said. "Every time they tried him, he'd either knock it down or intercept it. They just didn't test him after that. That's the reason he didn't get as many interceptions this year."

Murillo is enrolled for spring classes at Nebraska and will have two years to complete two years of remaining eligibility.

In addition to the aforementioned players, several other athletes will have opportunities to earn playing time on the defensive side in 2007. Junior college defensive tackle Joseph Townsend (6-4, 295) of Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, Calif., will battle for a starting position on the defensive interior. High school cornerback Anthony Blue (5-10, 170), of Cedar Hill, Texas, should also challenge for immediate playing time, as should high school linebacker Austin Stafford (6-2, 210) of Hayward, Calif.

Nebraska's recruiting class is filled with stars at every position, as 10 of the signees earned four-star rankings from Rivals.com. The Huskers secured the No. 1-rated prospects out of both Nebraska (Niles Paul) and Kansas (Blake Lawrence), while signing five of the top 15 prospects from Arizona, four of the top 100 prospects in Texas and one of the top 50 prospects out of California.

Nebraska took some major steps toward reloading for a Big 12 Championship run in 2007, with a class full of defensive talent. ■

For more daily recruiting information, visit [huskersillustrated.com](http://huskersillustrated.com), a member of the Rivals.com network.



# He'd Like to Practice

**Senior guard Perry determined to do what he has to do to contribute**

**By Mike Babcock**

"We're talking about practice, man . . . we're not talking about the game. We're talking about practice."

**NBA star Allen Iverson**

**M**arcus Perry isn't a practice player. But he would be, given a choice. "I would rather practice," he said recently. "I love practice, man. With practice you get better and you get the chemistry with your teammates. I've always loved practicing."

But when his Nebraska teammates are practicing, as likely as not, Perry is riding a stationary bike or shooting by himself at the other end of the court.

The senior from Anniston, Ala., can't practice. He's in too much pain. And if it weren't for this being his final season, he might not be playing at all.

The problem began with an inflammation in the arch of his left foot, plantar fasciitis. That led to a stress fracture and cortisone shots to alleviate the pain.

Cortisone injections — he had three — are excruciatingly painful in themselves. But Perry was determined to do what he had to do to contribute. "When game time comes, I go out there aching and hurting, and I just lay it out for the team," he said.

His signature contribution is 3-point shooting. He leads the team in 3-point shots attempted and made, hitting better than 40 percent. But he also has contributed in other, less obvious ways. Against Texas, he was assigned to guard Kevin Durant.

The Longhorns' phenomenal freshman stands 6-foot-9, while Perry is 6-2.

"I tried my best, just fight him, fight him, fight him, keep him frustrated, try to get up on him so he can't just do what he wants to do," Perry said afterward.

Even though Durant scored 26 points, "I thought we did a great job," said Sadler. "I thought Marcus Perry competed his tail off defensively."

That week, like every other, Perry couldn't practice. He prepared for what became the job of guarding Durant by riding and focusing on what Sadler said.

"If practice wasn't important then none of us would do it," said Sadler. "The speed of the game is what probably is going to become quicker and faster for him."

"Not getting to face it in practice is definitely a disadvantage."

Perry compensates with competitiveness comparable



Senior guard Marcus Perry leads the team in 3-point shots attempted and made, hitting more than 40 percent.

to Iverson's.

"I just don't want to sit out. Maybe if it wasn't my senior season I would take it a little slower, considering my career," Perry said. "But this is it for me and Charles (Richardson). It's going to be over, and I want to be that senior leader."

Sometimes he's discouraged and feels sorry for himself, he said. But through prayer and family those times are rare. When he sees his wife Portia and daughters Azzariah and Akayla on the video screen at the Sports Center, "it just gives me that drive, that willingness to compete on each and every possession." ■



# BASKETBALL NOTES

## ALEKS RULE

After his team's 71-50 victory against Colorado at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, coach Doc Sadler was asked if the Cornhuskers really had a "rule" requiring the ball be passed to Aleks Maric on every offensive possession.

The junior center scored 28 points against the Buffaloes.

"I don't know what you mean 'a rule,'" Sadler replied. "But we'd like for him to at least touch the basketball, and if that happens, I think we can be successful."

"That's what it's going to take to win any game. If you've got a low-post player, you need to get them the basketball. It makes everybody else's job easier."

Being the hub of the offense is far from easy, however.

"Everybody knows Aleks is going to be getting the basketball," Sadler said following a loss against Texas A&M in which Maric scored 15 points in the second half after going scoreless in the first. "I mean, it's hard in there."

"They subbed three or four guys at Aleks and continued to beat him and beat him, and he plays 29 minutes. Yeh, he misses some shots, but you get banged on for four or five minutes and you're a little fatigued."

Kansas State defenders were fatigued trying to stop Maric in Lincoln. He broke out of a first-half slump in Big 12 games by scoring 18 points in the first 20 minutes, then added 23 in the second half in a 74-63 victory.

The 41 points were the most ever by a Cornhusker at home and they were one short of the school single-season record, set by Eric Piatkowski against Oklahoma at the Big Eight Tournament in 1994.

## SEASON LIKE NO OTHER

Though much was yet to be determined, coach Connie Yori's women would appear to have positioned themselves for an NCAA Tournament bid, assuming, of course, they don't earn the bid out-right by winning the conference tournament.

The last time the Huskers earned an NCAA bid was 1999-2000.

Based on their RPI in mid-February, as well as the fact that they had reached and passed the unofficial, 20-victory guidepost, they should be positioned for an at-large bid, at worst. Oh yes, and they also were in position to win the conference regular-season championship, something they've accomplished only once, in 1987-88.

Yori's fifth team has achieved remarkable success, a far cry from her first, frustrating season, in which Nebraska managed one Big 12 victory and finished 8-20.

One factor has been health, knock on wood. Yori was able to put the same starting lineup on the floor through the first two dozen games: seniors Kiera Hardy, Chelsea Aubry, Jelena Spiric and Ashley Ford and sophomore Kelsey Griffin.

## BUMPED OFF BAYLOR

The next game is the most important, certainly, and victories all count the same. But among the highlights of the season to date was a nationally televised, 76-67 victory against No. 13-ranked Baylor at the Devaney Sports Center in early February.

Griffin, Nebraska's super soph from Eagle River, Alaska, scored 23 points and pulled down 13 rebounds in the game, her 10th double-double.

That effort came on the heels of a 15-point, six-rebound contribution to a 62-49 victory against Iowa State at the Sports Center three days earlier.

For the second time this season, Griffin earned Big 12 Player of the Week honors, sharing them with Oklahoma's Courtney Paris, also a sophomore. Griffin has led the Huskers, and ranked among the Big 12's best, in scoring and rebounding.

Danielle Page also came up big against Baylor, off the bench. The 6-foot-2 junior from Monument, Colo., who has come back from ACL surgery at the end of June, pulled down nine rebounds and set a school record by blocking nine shots. Nebraska's 10 blocked shots tied a school record.

The game, a "Dollar Days" promotion, drew an attendance of 6,105.

## CHART CLIMBING

Hardy continues to climb the school scoring chart. She surpassed 1,800 career points, getting a game-high 16 in Nebraska's 21st victory, 54-44 at Colorado. Hardy was seventh on the list, closing in on Debra Powell (1,843), Anna DeForge (1,859) and Nicole Kubik (1,867). The top three scorers in Husker history are: Karen Jennings (1990-93), 2,405 points; Maurice Ivy (1985-88), 2,131; and Amy Stephens (1986-89), 1,976.

Hardy, who has shot a career-best field goal percentage this season, was recently included among 3 candidates for the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award.

She also is among 50 candidates for the Naismith Trophy.

## ROAD WARRIORS

The Huskers opened conference play on Jan. 3 with a 79-75 victory against Texas, their first-ever against the Longhorns in Austin. The road victory was Nebraska's eighth in a row, on the way to a school record 10 consecutive road victories. The streak was snapped, by the narrowest of margins, at Texas A&M, 66-65.

With regular-season road games remaining at Iowa State (Feb. 20) and Oklahoma State (Feb. 24) and then tournament play, the Huskers are on pace to break the school record for road winning percentage. The 1975-76 team was 15-8 (.652) on the road. Nebraska has lost only twice in 14 away from the Sports Center. ■

## MEN'S SCHEDULE

Nov. 6	*Nebraska Kearney	W 74-72
Nov. 11	*SIU-Edwardsville	L 54-50
Nov. 14	Nebraska Omaha	W 76-62
Nov. 18	Creighton	W 73-61
Nov. 21	Lubbock Christian	W 65-42
Nov. 27	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	W 71-42
Nov. 29	North Texas	W 76-57
Dec. 2	@Rutgers	L 75-73
Dec. 9	@Oregon	L 68-56
Dec. 17	Alabama A&M	W 82-55
Dec. 20	**Wyoming	W 73-58
Dec. 22	**Hawaii	L 81-72
Dec. 23	**Houston	W 70-57
Dec. 30	***Miami	W 82-67
Jan. 3	Savannah State	W 81-53
Jan. 6	Western Kentucky	W 82-71
Jan. 10	@Iowa State	L 71-62
Jan. 17	@Oklahoma	L 70-53
Jan. 20	Colorado	W 71-50
Jan. 24	Texas	L 62-61
Jan. 27	@Kansas St.	L 61-45
Jan. 29	Kansas	L 76-56
Feb. 3	@Missouri	W 66-61
Feb. 6	@Texas Tech	W 61-59
Feb. 10	Texas A&M	L 66-55
Feb. 13	Kansas State	W 74-63
Feb. 17	@Kansas (ESPN+)	
Feb. 21	@Baylor (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 24	Missouri (ESPN+)	
Feb. 28	Iowa State	
Mar. 3	@Colorado (ESPN+)	
Mar. 5	Oklahoma State	
Mar. 8-11	Big 12 Championship, Oklahoma City	
	*Exhibition	
	**Rainbow Classic, Honolulu, Hawaii	
	***Orange Bowl Classic, Miami, Fla.	

## WOMEN'S SCHEDULE

Nov. 1	*Nebraska-Kearney	W 122-55
Nov. 4	*Nebraska-Omaha	W 97-59
Nov. 10	**Arizona State	L 87-60
Nov. 12	**Florida Atlantic	W 93-53
Nov. 13	**New Mexico	W 66-59
Nov. 17	Cal State Fullerton	W 76-62
Nov. 24	@UC Irvine	W 80-66
Nov. 26	@USC	W 72-65
Nov. 28	Texas-Pan American	W 77-37
Dec. 5	Minnesota	L 74-65
Dec. 9	Michigan	W 87-47
Dec. 16	Northwestern	W 73-58
Dec. 19	@Creighton	W 60-57
Dec. 21	Nicholls State	W 80-42
Dec. 28	***NC State	W 94-74
Dec. 29	***Florida	W 81-73
Jan. 3	@Texas	W 79-75
Jan. 6	Oklahoma	L 77-69
Jan. 13	@Kansas	W 63-54
Jan. 17	Kansas State	W 70-63
Jan. 20	@Missouri	W 76-66
Jan. 24	@Texas A&M	L 66-65
Jan. 27	Kansas	W 78-58
Jan. 31	Iowa State	W 62-49
Feb. 3	Baylor	W 76-67
Feb. 7	@Kansas State	W 62-55
Feb. 10	@Colorado	W 54-44
Feb. 14	Texas Tech	L 70-69
Feb. 17	Missouri	
Feb. 20	@Iowa State FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 24	@Oklahoma State	
Feb. 27	Colorado	
Mar. 6-10	Big 12 Championship, Oklahoma City	
	*Exhibition	
	**Veterans Day Classic, Tempe, Ariz.	
	**Big 12 Tournament, Dallas, Texas	
	***State Farm Classic, Gainesville, Fla.	



# 10 QUESTIONS



## with **JAY-R STROWBRIDGE**

**6-0/180 Fr. Guard**  
**Ardmore, Ala.**

**H**is given name is Charles Strowbridge II. So when he was little, he went by "JR," for "Junior." That's where it began. Then he changed it to "Jay-R," like the rapper "Jay-Z."

"I just looked at him as one of the best at what he was doing, so I thought it was unique," said Strowbridge. And not only would it be unique, it would provide motivation.

Like Jay-Z, he has always worked to be the best he could be.

Strowbridge might have been a decent football player because of his speed. His high school coaches tried to persuade him to give football a try. But he was committed to basketball, has been since an early age, which isn't surprising given the fact that he was born in Fort Campbell, Ky. His dad was stationed there in the military, and the family didn't move to Alabama until the end of his sixth-grade year.

"It was a big transition," he said. "Alabama was more about football."

Strowbridge, the MVP of the Mississippi-Alabama All-Star Game, planned to return to Kentucky for college, signing a letter of intent with Murray State in the fall of 2005. He was released from the letter, however, after coach Mick Cronin left for Cincinnati. Nebraska's previous staff began recruiting him seriously after watching him play in Las Vegas on an AAU summer team.

### **If you could eat only one thing for the next month, what would it be?**

"I've got to think about it. Probably macaroni and cheese. I love it, our pre-game macaroni and cheese. It's real creamy, not watered down. We have it before almost every game."

### **If you could have only three artists on your iPod, what three would they be?**

"I would have . . . I've got to have my gospel. I would have

Smokie Norful. This is a big one, uh, probably R. Kelly and Jay-Z, gotta have Jay-Z. I've got to have another one, Lil' Wayne."

### **What does Coach Sadler get on you about the most in practice?**

"I don't know, just being on top of my decision-making because he knows I can make the play, but sometimes I get out there and I want to do something, but I kind of hesitate. 'Should I do this? Is this what he wants?' He tells to just go out there and play."

### **Dwyane Wade, Kobe Bryant or Allen Iverson?**

"That's a good one. I like Dwyane Wade a lot, a lot. But I probably would have to go with Allen Iverson because he's doing well . . . he's representing for me, the small guards. So probably Allen Iverson overall."

### **What's the best movie you've seen recently?**

"I haven't been to a movie in a long time. One of the things that inspired me, I watched a DVD of Muhammad Ali. That inspired me, how he had so much confidence. He was always prepared. He would be ready when his time came."

### **When you cook for yourself, what's your specialty?**

"I don't cook too much, so probably breakfast, oatmeal. You've just got to heat it up."

### **If you could be successful in a collegiate sport other than basketball, what would you choose?**

"I've got to go with a team sport. I'd probably go with football, just trying to use my quickness. I'd probably have to be like a defensive back or safety. A team sport because I'm just into helping others. I go out there and score points (in basketball), but I'm trying to get assists for other people. I always try to put myself in winning situations, but I always try to help others at the same time."

### **Sky diving, bungee jumping or rock climbing?**

"That's a tough one. Oh man . . . probably sky diving. There are so many things (to consider), just the adventure, being up there so high and being on your own, so many thoughts running through your mind, hoping my parachute opens; that's the number one thing."

### **If someone gave you \$100,000 and you had to spend it, what would you do with it?**

"I'd probably just help the community in Ardmore, give some to the community, help others, or do something with my church, like 'I appreciate everything.' Build onto the church or something."

### **If you could sit down with any celebrity, sports or otherwise, who would it be and what would you ask?**

"Michael Jordan, and I would ask him how . . . I don't know, there are so many things running through my mind right now. I couldn't think of anything. I'd be speechless, to tell you the truth. I'd be so happy to meet. I'd tell him, 'Thank you, thank you.' The first thing I'd ask him about the struggling times, when his father died, what made him not give up or whatever. He's been through a lot. I've been through a lot and I never gave up. I'd see if we were on the same page." ■



# Just Getting Started

***Coach says freshman Brester is just scratching the surface of his potential***

**By Terry Douglass**

**CRAIG BRESTER**  
**REDSHIRT FRESHMAN WRESTLER**

**N**ebbraska's wrestling program has never had a two-time national champion.

So to hear Cornhuskers coach Mark Manning say that he believes Craig Brester has a reasonable opportunity to achieve such elite status might come as a bit of a shock. It's even more surprising when you consider that the 197-pound redshirt freshman is just hoping to make a run at his first national title in March.

That's how excited Manning is about Brester's potential.

"No one has ever been a two-time national champion for us, and we've thrown that out there to our guys," Manning said. "We know that someone is eventually going to step up and do it, so we always say, 'Why can't it be one of you guys?'"

"We've thrown that challenge out there, and I know Craig's one of those guys who, in the back of his mind, wants to do that."

Not that Brester will admit it.

"I think that's something you go at one year at a time," Brester said. "I want to go out and try to win it this year. I don't want to get caught thinking that far ahead."

Considering what he's seen out of Brester in his first season of college competition, Manning can't help but be

giddy about the future. The Howells (Neb.) native won 13 of his first 17 matches and was ranked ninth in the country with a little more than a month remaining in the season.

"To have the success that he's having right now as a redshirt freshman is really promising," Manning said. "You always hope guys are going to come on this quickly, but it's a tough adjustment from high school to college, and he's done a great job of working this last spring and summer. That's why he's having the success now."

"Thinking about how far he could go in the next three years and last month of this season is pretty exciting."

Manning said that Brester has flourished since becoming a "12-month, year-around wrestler." In high school, Brester was a successful three-sport athlete, also playing football and competing in track and field.

Even though Brester had 141-4 record in high school with two state championships and two other top-three finishes, he said he rarely practiced wrestling in the offseason. Now, that has completely changed.

"In high school, I did a lot of football, and during the summer, I only did a little bit of wrestling," Brester said. "Being able to concentrate on one sport makes you get better more quickly. You don't lose anything because you don't have to start over again each season."

Manning said Brester is just starting to scratch the surface of his potential.

"His wrestling skills are going to get better," Manning said. "He's not there yet as far as all the skills being down





and fine-tuned, but he's only going to get better."

Much of that improvement came during Brester's true freshman season in 2005-06 when he was the practice partner of three-time All-American B.J. Padden.

"It's a humbling experience," Brester said of his daily battles with Padden. "You don't get any easy days in practice. You've got to fight for your life pretty much every day, but the other thing is you don't get any worse."

"You get one takedown in practice, and you're happy. You take that, then you just keep building on it, and you keep working, and you keep getting better."

While getting worked over on the wrestling mat was a new experience for Brester, he tried to always keep things in perspective.

"One thing I did was just come here with an open mind, figuring I was going to get beat up," Brester said. "You need to realize that you're probably not going to come in and tear it up right away."

Manning was impressed with Brester's approach.

"Craig took some lickings and some whippings," Manning said.

"But he just kept on learning. He picked up a lot from B.J."

Interestingly, it was another former Nebraska 197-pound wrestler that actually inspired Brester to take up the sport. Growing up in Howells, Brester got to watch ex-Husker Brad Vering — a national champion in 2000 and a past member of Team USA's Olympic and World squads. Later, Brester and his family made several trips to Lincoln to watch his hometown hero compete.

"We really got into it from watching Brad wrestle down here," Brester said. "He's a guy you really want to emulate, especially when he's from your high school. I still talk to him, and he's a nice guy — he comes back and wrestles with me every once in a while."

"I really look up to him."

Manning said Brester is doing his best to follow the trail blazed by Vering.

"When you come from a small community like that and you have someone like Brad Vering from your hometown, that's really neat," Manning said. "That gives hope to other kids, and that's kind of Craig's story."

On the mat, Manning said much of

Brester's success is based on him being the epitome of a hard-nosed competitor.

"He just has that toughness about him and a tremendous work ethic. As a coach, you want 10 of him in your lineup," Manning said. "He's hard to score on, and he doesn't want to give up anything."

Brester's goal is simply to out-work and out-hustle the competition.

"I just want to start off quick and keep it going the whole time," Brester said. "I don't have perfect technique and all that, but I try to go hard the whole time and try to just win the match doing that."

Since getting off to a slow start following early season surgery on a torn meniscus in his knee, Manning said Brester has steadily improved. Now, there's no telling how far he might go.

"I expect Craig to be an All-American — I really do," Manning said. "How far he can go will just be up to some good breaks and him progressing in the last month of the season."

"Really, it's all up to him." ■

**Terry Douglass** is the sports editor of the *Grand Island (Neb.) Independent*. He can be reached at [terry.douglass@msn.com](mailto:terry.douglass@msn.com)



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# **TRACK** Quiet Confidence



Sheryl Morgan placed seventh in the 400 at both the Big 12 Indoor and Outdoor Championships in 2006.

## ***Jamaican sprinter Morgan inspired by former Husker standout, Olympian Ottey***

**BY KATELYN KERKHOVE**

**T**

o say Sheryl Morgan is quiet would be an understatement.

In the two years Nebraska volunteer coach Mark Devenney has worked with the senior sprinter, he can't recall a time when she has initiated a conversation.

But Devenney would never hold it against Morgan, because the

Jamaica native has notched several successes since becoming a Husker in 2005.

"I think we have a really good relationship — she's really honest with me," Devenney said. "She'll come up to me and say, 'my hamstring is tight,' and I trust her. So we stop right then. She's not very verbal, but she has a really good sense of humor. People just never get to see it. But I get to see it."

In her Husker career, Morgan has placed as high as fourth in the Big 12



Conference Indoor Championships. She posted a time of :54.14 in 2005 in the 400 meters, and she ran a leg of the 4x400-meter relay team.

Hailing from Manchester, Jamaica, Morgan is another example of Nebraska's success with Jamaican athletes.

What started with former Nebraska coach Frank Sevine in the 1960s has developed into a large network of Husker alumni in Jamaica, including Kingston, where Husker coach Matt Martin found Morgan.

Several of the success stories can be seen on the Hall of Fame wall by the indoor track located in the Bob Devaney Sports Center complex. While many of the first Jamaican athletes were male, by the early to mid-1980s, female athletes were finding their own success as well.

Morgan said former Husker and Olympic gold medalist Merlene Ottey, who also hails from Jamaica, was a definite inspiration to her as a child, though not the only reason she came to Nebraska.

"I think the competition over here is different," Morgan said. "You have faster athletes at the different colleges. But there are athletes staying home now, and I think they are doing a job competition-wise. It's kind of the same, but if you want a different experience you can come over here."

Though credited with finding Morgan when he attended the Junior World Championships in Kingston in 2002, Martin said the decision was easy once the final of the 400-meter competition was finished as Morgan placed third with a time of :52.61, making her one of the fastest at that distance in the world among women under 20.

"She's a traditional kind of sprinter you see coming out of Jamaica," Martin said. "Either they are big and powerful or they have the style like Sheryl, which is the thin and graceful and light-on-their-feet kind. She's just a classic Jamaican sprinter."

Martin knew what she could do. But meeting her for the first time was difficult. The introduction was made by a male sprinter at George C. Foster College, which Morgan also was attending. As it turned out, they both committed to Nebraska. But, Morgan was the only one who qualified academically.

"I'd really like to see her, first of all, with a college degree," Martin said of his goals for Morgan. "I'm not sure she believed that was going to happen

when she first came here or was even thinking about that kind of stuff. But I'm very confident now that she has that as a goal, sees the road it's going to take to finish that process and that she's well on her way to doing that."

On the track, Morgan has even opted to try the 400-meter hurdles in an effort to get noticed on the professional level.

When she competed in the event in high school, she said, her fastest time was 56 seconds. The winning times in the Big 12 are around 55 to 56 seconds, something that is too tempting for Morgan to ignore.

"I want to see which event is my better event, so it's not really the places, just the time, (so) that after I finish school I can get a contract," Morgan said. "I think the 400 hurdles aren't really that hard. It's like doing the 800, and I did that in high school."

But Devenney still considers it one of the more challenging races. He proposed the idea of trying the event again at the end of last year in hopes Morgan would consider it over the summer.

When she came to him in August, eager to start practicing the hurdles for the first time since high school,

Devenney was ecstatic. In addition to Morgan's "God-given talents," Devenney said, her personality makes her even better suited for the race.

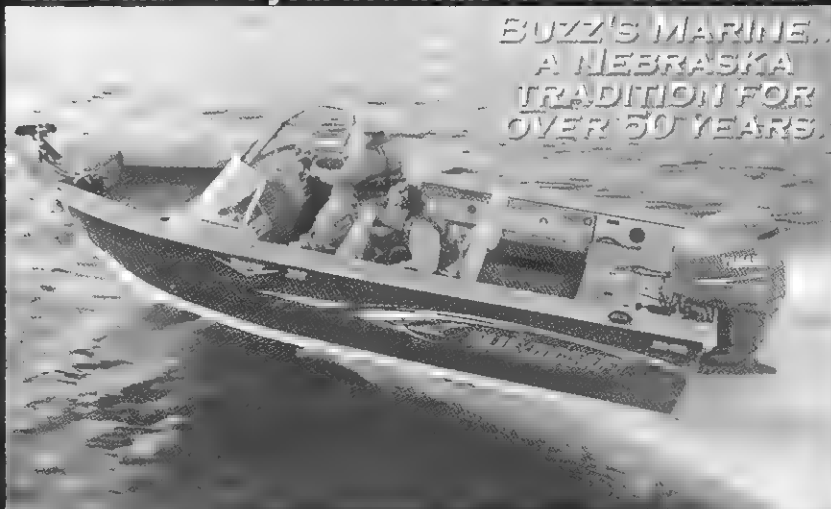
"I don't think much rattles Sheryl, and that's an event you never run a perfect race," Devenney said. "I think her demeanor . . . she won't panic if something goes wrong."

With a very specific goal of running a 53-second 400 at the Big 12 Indoor Championships on Feb. 23-24 at Iowa State, Morgan has adjusted to life in Nebraska both on and off the track. She hopes to earn a college degree and has a legitimate shot at running at the professional level. But, to Martin, there is one more thing he hopes his silent sprinter will continue to do.

"I would just like to continue to see her compete every time she lines up," Martin said, "that she runs with a certain amount of pride that is reflective of the kind of high school program she comes from, the tradition of great sprinters they've had in Jamaica and the tradition of success we've had at Nebraska. She continues to do that and represent us well each time she steps on the track. And I hope she finishes her career in that manner." ■

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# Leadership Key

*Anderson says 2007 Huskers understand their roles better than any team he's coached*

**By Mike Babcock**

**T**he particulars vary slightly, depending on the source. Mike Anderson tells the story one way. Tony Watson and Andy Gerch tell it another.

For instance, Anderson claims that Watson and Gerch were expecting him to wear the red sport coat. Watson claims they were happy he didn't.

Be that as it may, here's what happened.

The past couple of years Anderson has worn a red sport coat, of which he says he is particularly fond, to the team banquet, held during preseason practice. The Nebraska baseball coach asked Watson and Gerch to speak at the banquet.

Watson and Gerch are veteran players, both juniors, and because of their experience, Anderson is counting on them for team leadership this season.

Johnny Dorn is a third. He'll fill the role more by action than words. He leads by example "probably more than anybody we've had in a long time," said Anderson. "He's one of those kids I will point out to our freshman, 'That's how you work. That's how you go about your business.' He's a great example of being that way."

Others will be expected to fill leadership roles in certain situations. But "those are about the three guys I really count on," Anderson said.

Junior Ryan Wehrle, like Watson a preseason All-American, is working to be a leader, too, but "I wouldn't put him in the role of leader yet," said Anderson.

"I push Ryan all the time. I'd like Ryan to take more of that role. He's quiet. He just goes about his business. I'm trying to get him better with his communication, with everything else.

I'm not sure he'll ever be a leader in that respect."

Wehrle does lead by performance, however. "Ryan's a natural athlete. He gets results," said Anderson. "Our guys anticipate him performing well.

"They want him to perform well. And he does, in games."

So anyway, Watson and Gerch collaborated on a banquet joke, based on Anderson's familiar red sport coat. They borrowed a similar colored sport coat from sophomore teammate Jeff Lanning. "I don't know why he has one," said Watson.

(Anderson says the coat belongs to Lanning's uncle.)

Gerch spoke first, with Watson stepping outside the room. Gerch thanked people for attending, some 600 at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln, and then he thanked Anderson for not wearing the red sport coat, for "retiring" it, he said.

As Gerch thanked "Coach A," Watson walked in wearing the red sport coat from Lanning, "trying to kind of mimic me a little bit," Anderson said.

"It was a good laugh," said Watson.

That's not the end of the story, however.

Anderson wore the red sport coat to the next day's practice, concealed under a hooded sweatshirt. When he called the team together before the workout, he said he hadn't taken kindly to the red-sport-coat mimicry at the banquet.

"I said, 'I didn't think you guys were very respectful.' I kind of busted their tails a little bit," Anderson said. "Their jaws dropped. They thought I was really mad at them. Then I said, 'You know what, there's only one red sport coat.'"

As he said that, he pulled off the



**Tony Watson, a third-team All-American, finished 10-2 as a sophomore.**

sweatshirt to reveal the coat.

Watson's version of the story differs on that. He and some of the older players were standing at the back of the team huddle, laughing from the start.

They anticipated something when Anderson mentioned the coat. "Coach isn't a very good joke-teller," said Watson. "We knew he was joking."

Some coaches wouldn't have been joking. They wouldn't have been secure enough in their position to allow the lines of authority to be blurred, even briefly. Anderson, however, is an exception. "We had a blast with it," he said.

And more importantly, perhaps, "when kids can do that, (when) they feel that comfortable, (when) they can do that with me, with a coach, I think that's kind of flattering," he said. "So I don't have a problem with it."

Anderson regularly puts players in positions of responsibility, as part of their development off the field as well as on it. That's why he picked Watson





Junior outfielder Andy Gerch is being counted on to provide leadership.

and Gerch to speak at the banquet. "Plus, I knew they'd do very well," he said.

"I think they represent this team, and that's what I was looking for. Those types of things, all the time, are very important to me."

He'll pick other players for other situations as the season goes on. Instead of his talking to the team about something, "I'll sit down and talk with the young man and say, 'Listen, if this came from your mouth, that just gives it that much more power.' I've been doing it in practice quite a bit, where I'll call somebody up and have it planned out," he said. "They'll talk to the team. So it puts them in a leadership role."

The players on this team, his fifth, understand their roles better than any he has coached, Anderson said. With that and a core of quality players returning, the Cornhuskers should again make a run at the College World Series.

They were poised to get to Omaha last season but faltered in a home regional, losing to a pair of teams with hot pitchers, Manhattan and San Francisco.

That disappointment has been set aside, for the most part during fall practice. "We put ourselves in position; it didn't happen," said Anderson. "I think the same thing this year. We looked at the end in sight. That's one of the very first things I address with our team: How do we want to finish? What position do we want to be in?"

"If we can do that, put ourselves in that position again, I like our chances if we're sitting in a regional with a high RPI."

#### WELCOME RETURN

Watson and Wehrle were draft-eligible sophomores and could have left to play professionally. Watson was selected by the Baltimore Orioles in the 17th round last June and Wehrle was selected by the Cincinnati Reds in the 18th round.

The money wasn't right for either, of course, but "it's not very tough to come back to a place like Nebraska," said Watson, who was first-team All-Big 12 and a third-team All-American, finishing with a 10-2 record and 2.78 earned-run average.

Wehrle also was first-team all-conference and a third-team All-American, the first middle infielder at Nebraska to be so honored, after hitting .367 with 22 doubles, eight home runs, 48 runs-batted-in and 14 stolen bases in 14 attempts.

Deciding to delay his professional career was hard, Wehrle said. "It's been a dream of mine since I can't remember, since I was 5. So when the opportunity is there, it's hard. But I think one more year for me is going to be better anyway. I was comfortable with it. I made a decision and I just stuck with it. So I'm happy to be here."

Naturally, Anderson is, too. "That helps us," he said. "But I think they have a very good understanding of what their next step is. If they come (back) here and do some good things, it will help them advance to that next step."

#### SOLID NUCLEUS

In addition to Watson and Wehrle, Dorn, Gerch (designated hitter), Andrew Brown (utility player) and Jake Opitz (second base) earned all-conference recognition.

Opitz and Wehrle give the Cornhuskers a strong middle-infield. "There might be better players for their teams, and that's fine," Anderson said.

"But I really like our double-play combination."

Gerch, who batted .313 in Big 12 play, will return to the outfield after being forced into a designated-hitter's role following shoulder surgery in September. More significantly, he had to deal with the death of his father last season.

"What I've seen out of that young man in the fall and spring, it's the most consistent I've ever seen him," said Anderson. "And what's nice to be able to say, it's one of the first times I've ever seen Andy Gerch at one of our practices smiling."

"I don't think he was ever not happy to be here, but you go through some of the things he's gone through, it's hard to put a smile on the face."

Gerch will be batting somewhere in the middle of the order, along with Wehrle and Brown. Beyond that, Anderson was still looking at batting combinations when the team left for Arlington, Texas, where it was scheduled to open the season.

"I'm not saying this because I'm insecure with what we're doing," he said. "I'd still say we have some battles going on for who's going to be in that one and two spot. And I think we have some battles about who's going to be in the lower half of the order."

Junior outfielder Bryce Nimmo and sophomore third baseman Jake Mort, returning starters, are among those competing for the job as lead-off hitter, along with newcomers DJ Belfonte (a true freshman), Jeff Tezak and Craig Corriston.

## PITCHING

Watson, Dorn and sophomore Charlie Shirek have experience as weekend starters, with sophomore Erik Bird, like Dorn and Shirek a right-hander, getting first shot at replacing Brett Jensen as the closer. "I'm very confident in him," Anderson said of the 6-foot-1, 220-pound Bird. "He wants that role. He's wanted that role since last year. If he had a chance, he'd take it from Brett Jensen (last season).

"His mentality, his work habits, everything, that's what he wants to do."

Zach Herr, Steve Edlefsen and Thad Weber could figure in, too. "So I don't want to put all the pressure on Eric that he has to do it," said Anderson.

Sophomore left-hander Drew Bowman, a transfer from Arizona State, is among those would pitch on weekends, depending on how he continues to develop.

"The thing that Drew has never really shown, yet, is consistency," Anderson said. "He's had a great fastball, a lot of velocity."

## CATCHING

Jensen, pitcher Joba Chamberlain (first-round pick of the New York Yankees) and catcher Jeff Christy were key losses off last season's team. Sophomore Jeff Lanning is getting the first crack at replacing Christy. Juniors Mitch Abeita, a transfer, and Mark

Hightower also figure in. "What they do is extremely important," Anderson said. "But Jeff Lanning is going to be a guy that starts the majority of games to start."

Lanning is concentrating on his defense. "I'd just like to get the coaches' trust and the pitching staff's trust in me, (for) my defensive play," he said.

"That was his (Christy's) biggest thing. That's why everybody loved him so much because you don't get much better than that guy defensively." ■

## THE ROSTER

**INFIELDERS** — \*Andrew Brown (Sr.), Craig Corriston (Jr.), Andy Cotton (Fr.), \*Jake Mort (So.), \*Jake Opitz (Jr.), Brett Sowers (Fr.), Jeff Tezak (Jr.), Thad Weber (Jr.), \*Ryan Wehrle (Jr.)

**OUTFIELDERS** — DJ Belfonte (Fr.), \*Andy Gerch (Jr.), Aaron Jarosh (Fr.), John Lee (RFr.), \*Bryce Nimmo (Jr.), \*Nick Sullivan (So.)

**CATCHERS** — Mitch Abeita (Jr.), \*Mark Hightower (Jr.), \*Jeff Lanning (So.), Dominick Piazza (Fr.)

**RIGHT-HANDED PITCHERS** — \*Erik Bird (So.), Joe Broekemeier (Fr.), \*Johnny Dorn (Jr.), \*Steve Edlefsen (Jr.), \*Matt Foust (Jr.), \*Mike Harmelink (Sr.), Mike Nesseth (Fr.), Mike Nihsen (RFr.), \*Tim Radmacher (So.), \*Drew Schwab (So.), Sam Sharpe (Fr.), \*Charlie Shirek (So.), \*Luke Wertz (Jr.)

**LEFT-HANDED PITCHERS** — Drew Bowman (So.), Brian Feekin (Fr.), \*Zach Herr (So.), \*Dan Jennings (So.), \*Jon Klausing (Jr.), Eric Rose (Fr.), Tim Scott (RFr.), Charlie Shaver (Fr.), Wes Simmons (RFr.), \*Tony Watson (Jr.)

\*denotes letter-winner

## THE SCHEDULE

**Feb. 16** — \*New Mexico at Arlington, Texas; **16** — \*New Mexico at Arlington, Texas; **17** — \*Texas-Arlington at Arlington, Texas; **18** — \*Illinois State at Arlington, Texas; **23** — \*\*Texas A&M-Corpus Christi at Houston; **24** — Rice at Houston; **25** — Florida Atlantic at Houston

**March 2** — \*\*\*Iowa at Deland, Fla.; **3** — \*\*\*Notre Dame at Deland, Fla.; **3** — \*\*\*Stetson at Deland, Fla.; **6** — Nebraska-Kearney; **9-11** — at Alabama; **13** — Wayne State; **15-17** — Texas Tech; **20-21** — Western Illinois; **23-25** — Missouri; **28** — Northern Colorado; **30-31** — at Texas A&M

**April 1** — at Texas A&M; **3** — Creighton at Rosenblatt Stadium; **5-7** — Oklahoma State; **10** — Iowa; **11** — at Wichita State; **13-15** — at Oklahoma; **17** — Creighton; **20-22** — Texas; **24-25** — North Dakota State; **27-29** — Kansas State

**May 4-6** — Coastal Carolina; **11-13** — Baylor; **15** — Creighton at Rosenblatt Stadium; **18-20** — at Kansas; **23-27** — at Big 12 Tournament, Oklahoma City

**June 1-4** — NCAA regionals; **8-12** — NCAA Super Regionals; **15-25** — College World Series

\*UTA Invitational

\*\*Rice Invitational

\*\*\*Stetson Invitational

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# Last Go-Around

**Teammates have  
different perspective  
entering senior season**

**By Mike Babcock**

**T**he little things mean a lot to Ashley DeBuhr.

That can happen for a senior.

The first three years "you just don't appreciate the little things," DeBuhr said on the Monday before she and her Nebraska softball teammates took a flight to Honolulu, Hawaii, where they opened the season in the Paradise Classic.

"You don't think the little things are anything big until this year."

Even in practice, "it's like, 'Wow, it's the last year we're going to practice,'" she said, vowing to "go hard every play. You don't want to leave anything behind and regret it years down the road that you didn't give it all when you could have."

Jamie Waldecker has similar feelings. "This is your last go-around, and basically, it's do-or-die; it's all or nothing," she said. "You start to look at things differently."

"You start thinking about every at-bat. After that (last) at-bat is over, you're not going to get any more at-bats next year. It's just different. I don't know how many of us are going to go on to play pro ball, but this is my last time playing softball."

Waldecker has been playing since age 5.

DeBuhr and Waldecker provide a solid foundation for a team with high expectations in the wake of last season, when the Huskers finished 44-12 and ranked No. 14.

Coach Rhonda Revelle's best lineup has DeBuhr pitching and Waldecker catching. It's been that way the past two seasons. "They very much complement one another, and they

have so much trust in each other," said Revelle, in her 15th year.

Succinctly put, they are "a very great tandem," Revelle said.

DeBuhr, a right-hander, is among 50 players on the pre-season watch list for the USA Softball National Collegiate Player of the Year Award, following a stellar junior season in which she posted a 26-10 record with a 1.50 earned-run average.

She earned first-team All-Big 12 and All-Midwest recognition,

striking out 304 in 229.1 innings, to become the first Husker pitcher to strike out 300 or more in consecutive seasons. As a sophomore, she struck 335 in 288.2 innings. Peaches James holds the school single-season strikeout record with 394 in 2004.

DeBuhr, who pitched in 10 games as a freshman, has had "tremendous growth every year," said Revelle. "She's had good numbers a lot of those years, but even talking to her now, what she sees in the game, what she can do when she reads a hitter."

"We just have all the confidence in the world not only in her pitches and her physical ability, but (also) her ability to make decisions on where she's looking to locate the ball and with how much movement. She's just really astute to the game."

DeBuhr also will get an opportunity to hit more often this season. She had only 30 official at-bats as a junior, hitting .267 with one home run and eight RBIs.

"She's strong. She makes good contact. She's very competitive. And she's very clutch," Revelle said. Shin splints kept her from batting

more in 2006.

Hitting can help her pitching, according to DeBuhr.

"Sometimes pitching-wise I think too much when I'm out there, and being able to bat, I'll go out there and bat and I'll have less time to think about things," she said. "I think it will just calm me down when I need to be calmed down."

Hitting also can support her pitching. At the Paradise Classic, she drove in the lone run in a shutout victory against No. 24-ranked Auburn. She allowed the Tigers only two base



Ashley DeBuhr was a first-team All-Big 12 selection as a junior. She finished 26-10 and struck out 304.

hits and tied a career-high by striking out 17.

Waldecker, who started 157 games the past three seasons, batted a career-best .237 with five home runs and 37 runs-batted-in as a junior. The majority of her starts have been at catcher, including nearly every game DeBuhr has pitched.

"It's kind of neat," Waldecker said. "I love catching Ashley. When I first got here our freshman year, she was a little quiet. Usually, pitchers are little princesses and need their pampering, but Ashley's not like that. She's easy to work with."

"I know Ashley's going to do great things. She's doing great things already, and I know this coming year, she's going to be even better. She's that much smarter and that much more aware of things that are going on. It's going to be fun."

And both she and DeBuhr are determined to finish without regrets.

## GETTING STARTED

The Huskers won four of seven games at the Paradise Classic, losing twice to host Hawaii, including by 6-5 in a third-place game. They also lost to Hawaii 4-3 as well as to Portland State, 2-0. Their victories were by 1-0 against Portland State, 5-1 against DePaul and 1-0 twice against Auburn. DeBuhr pitched both Auburn shutouts and the DePaul victory, returning to Lincoln with a 3-1 record.

Freshman Alex Hupp pitched the shutout against Portland State, taking a no-hitter into the sixth inning before a single - and the only hit.

The last Husker freshman to pitch a shutout in her collegiate debut was James, 3-0 against Nevada-Las Vegas in February of 2001.

Nebraska will play in three more tournaments on the road before opening its home schedule with the Big Red Tournament March 16-18.

The Huskers' chemistry can benefit from so many games on the road to start the season. "We really come together and learn different things about each other that we can bring onto the field and trust one another," said DeBuhr.

The team is "like a bunch of sisters, to be honest with you," Waldecker said.

## LEADING OFF

Among those Revelle has had to replace this season are Lizzy Aumua and Jeff Yoachim, who batted at the top of the order. Senior Devin Porter and sophomore Meghan Mullin were at the top of the order for most of the games at the Paradise Classic, with Porter batting lead-off. Porter gives the order a different look.



Jamie Waldecker



Devin Porter

"The thing that Devin can do that those others couldn't do is she can lead off with a double. She can take the ball 'yard' occasionally," said Revelle.

Porter, a second-team All-Big 12 shortstop, hit .277 last season with eight home runs, five doubles and three triples. She walked 16 times and had an on-base percentage of .382. "Once she gets on, she's not going to be as much of a steal threat," Revelle said. "But if she comes up the second time with runners in scoring position, she's going to be a better RBI producer than the last two that have come before her."

Porter drove in 27 runs in 2006. So when she's batting lead-off, "it's going to look different," said Revelle. "But I'm excited about the opportunity that we maybe have (with) a few more RBI producers throughout the lineup."

Porter, Waldecker, DeBuhr and third baseman Carmen Kier represent the team's experience. All have played in 100 or more games at Nebraska.

## INFIELD INTACT, ALMOST

Porter, Kier and sophomore first baseman Crystal Carwile provide the Huskers with a veteran infield. Carwile batted .273 with 12 home runs and 42 RBIs. Her 12 home runs were one shy of the school freshman record and double the combined home run total of Nebraska freshmen in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005.

## COMPETITIVE CONFERENCE

Big 12 coaches picked the Huskers to finish third, behind defending champion Texas A&M and Baylor. "This year it's wide-open," Revelle said. "I feel like our pitching staff is second to none. I feel like - there are a lot of good teams, don't get me wrong - (but) one through three, we could put any one of our pitchers on the mound and win a Big 12 game, with any of those pitchers. This game really does start with pitching, and often times, the teams that make it the furthest are the ones that have great pitching."

Sophomore right-hander Molly Hill goes into the season as Nebraska's No. 2 pitcher. She was 18-2 with a 1.83 ERA and 172 strikeouts in 145.1 innings in 2006.

"She had a great record last year, but I think if Molly were to sit here and talk to you, she would say that there were a lot of times last year that she was uncomfortable to the point that it affected her performance," said Revelle. "Not only are her pitches crisper this year, she is just much more comfortable in her own skin as a pitcher."

In addition to strong pitching, "I think we're going to play great team defense," Revelle said. And communication is a key to because "one of the main differences between baseball and softball is, everything is in very close quarters. If we're not communicating and working together, it (defense) doesn't happen." ■

## THE ROSTER

**INFIELDERS** — \*Devin Porter (Sr.), \*Carmen Kier (Sr.), \*Crystal Carwile (So.), \*Kimberly Fuller (So.), Barrett Whitney (Fr.)

**OUTFIELDERS** — \*Jaime Borg (Sr.), Crystal Gonzalez (Fr.), Haley Long (So.), \*Meghan Mullin (So.), \*Darcy Rutherford (So.)

**CATCHERS** — \*Jamie Waldecker (Sr.), \*Brittany Pascale (So.)

**RIGHT-HANDED PITCHERS** — \*Ashley DeBuhr (Sr.), \*Molly Hill (So.), Alex Hupp (Fr.)

\*denotes letter-winner

## THE SCHEDULE

**Feb. 8** — \*Auburn, Hawaii at Honolulu, Hawaii; **9** — \*Portland State, DePaul at Honolulu, Hawaii; **10** — \*Portland State at Honolulu, Hawaii; **11** — \*Auburn, Hawaii at Honolulu, Hawaii; **23** — \*\*Tennessee Tech, Florida State at Columbus, Ga.; **24** — \*\*Seton Hall, Mississippi State at Columbus, Ga.; **25** — \*\*Bracket Play at Columbus, Ga.

**March 2** — \*\*\*Fresno State, DePaul at Las Vegas; **3** — \*\*\*California, Southern Utah at Las Vegas; **4** — \*\*\*Delaware State at Las Vegas; **9** — \*\*\*\*Minnesota, Western Illinois at Wichita, Kan.; **10** — \*\*\*Western Illinois, Minnesota at Wichita, Kan.; **11** — \*\*\*\*Wichita State at Wichita, Kan.; **16** — \*\*\*\*\*North Dakota State, Arkansas; **17** — \*\*\*\*\*Arkansas, North Dakota State; **18** — \*\*\*\*\*North Dakota State, Arkansas; **21** — Creighton; **24-25** — at Baylor; **27** — Drake (DH); **28** — Colorado State (DH); **31** — Texas Tech

**April 1** — Texas Tech; **4** — at Kansas; **6-7** — at Texas A&M; **9** — South Dakota State (DH); **11** — at Creighton; **14-15** — Texas; **17** — Iowa State; **19** — at Iowa State; **21-22** — at Oklahoma; **25** — Kansas; **28-29** — Oklahoma State

**May 5-6** — at Missouri; **10-12** — Big 12 Championship at Oklahoma City; **18-20** — NCAA Regional; **25-27** — NCAA Super Regional

**May 31-June 6** — Women's College World Series at Oklahoma City

\*Paradise Softball Classic

\*\*NFCA Leadoff Classic

\*\*\*UNLV Tournament

\*\*\*\*Shocker Invitational

\*\*\*\*\*Big Red Tournament



# CROSSWORD

## ACROSS

- 3 2006 leading receiver (yards)
- 8 Basketball coach
- 12 Basketball point guard
- 14 Ex-Husker basketball player with Atlanta Hawks
- 15 Ex-Husker on Bears, injured for Super Bowl
- 18 2005 leading tackler
- 21 2006 interceptions leader
- 24 State producing seven 2007 recruits
- 27 I-back leaving for NFL
- 28 Nate Swift's home state
- 29 Assistant moving to UCLA
- 31 2006 sacks leader

## DOWN

- 1 Junior college cornerback recruit
- 2 New defensive line coach
- 4 Kicker leaving team
- 5 Basketball leading scorer
- 6 2006 leading tackler
- 7 2006 leader in pass breakups
- 9 Junior college safety recruit
- 10 Assistant moving to North Carolina
- 11 Ndamukong Suh's home state
- 13 2006 leading receiver (catches)
- 16 New offensive coordinator
- 17 Ex-Husker assistant with Super Bowl champion Colts
- 19 Kicker recruit
- 20 Quarterback recruit from Texas
- 22 Baseball coach
- 23 Running back recruit from Texas
- 25 Ex-Husker basketball player with New Jersey Nets
- 26 Wide receiver recruit from Omaha
- 30 Junior college quarterback recruit

Answers in April issue



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## FEBRUARY CROSSWORD SOLUTION





## Raising Arizona

*Pair of powerful, athletic offensive linemen represent success in a fertile recruiting area*



**Mike  
BABCOCK**

WITH EACH RECRUITING CLASS, Bill Callahan has focused on physical presence and producing a program with a Big 12 Conference look.

The profile remains the same, he said, "big-bodied wide receivers, fast, speed guys, big size in the defensive and offensive lines, especially in the offensive line."

The Cornhuskers signed three offensive linemen, one of whom will delay enrollment as a grayshirt, Aaron Schulte from Norfolk Catholic High School. Schulte is "one of those big-statured Nebraska linemen you look for," said Callahan.

He's listed at 6-foot-6, 320 pounds.

Stature is more important than state, of course, and the other two come from a state in which Nebraska hasn't done a lot of recruiting — Arizona.

Jaivorio Burkes and Marcel Jones are from the Phoenix area, and not only do they fit Callahan's physical "template," their athleticism belies their size. Burkes is listed at 6-5, 315, Jones at 6-7, 300. And both are outstanding basketball players.

Burkes "has length, as we say. He's a long-arm, big-hand guy. He's strong. He's athletic. He's one of those wide-bodied guys," Callahan said.

He's a "powerful guy, a really powerful man, and he makes it look easy. As you watch his highlight film, at times it's just a joke. It's not even fair."

Apparently, the same applies on a basketball court.

Jones, a 300-pounder, looks as if he weighs 285 tops, according to Callahan. And he's "so athletic" that "our people over here were excited about him as a basketball court," Callahan said, referring to Doc Sadler and his staff.

Burkes and Jones, and Schulte a year from now, will join Keith Williams, D.J. Jones and Cruz Barrett — all of whom redshirted as freshmen — along with Jacob Hickman, who played after a grayshirt, in defining Nebraska's offensive line of the future.

It will be "big, square, physical," said Callahan.

Burkes and Marcel Jones also represent success in a fertile recruiting area that provided the Cornhuskers with three other high school athletes.

Prince Amukamara, Eric Hagg and William Yancy also are from the greater Phoenix area, and play basketball, too. Hagg and Yancy are Ironwood High teammates.

Amukamara, Burkes and Hagg all visited Nebraska the weekend of the Colorado game. Hagg committed while in Lincoln, and Amukamara and Burkes joked about the possibility of them coming along, too. As it turned out, they did.

Cornhusker assistant Bill Busch "really orchestrated everybody, communicating with one another and exchanging thoughts about Nebraska," Callahan said. "Before you know it, one was selling the other and the other one was selling

each other.

"That's how it happens sometimes, by word of mouth."

Texas was the only non-Arizona school to attract more Arizona players than Nebraska, signing seven. Callahan credited Busch, who also helped get Florida native Armando Murillo from Eastern Arizona Community College.

Nebraska's recruiting classes since 1973, Tom Osborne's first year as head coach, have included only 15 players from Arizona — two of them junior college transfers — and never more than one in a season, with a single exception. It signed four in 1988. Tyrone Byrd, from Chandler, was the only one of the four to letter.

Interestingly enough, the Cornhuskers signed only four Nebraskans in 1988, too, the fewest in-state scholarship recruits ever to that point in time.

The next year, Nebraska signed only three in-state players, compared to seven from Texas. Sound familiar? In-state athletes remain the lifeblood of the program. But recruiting is driven by population base, which Nebraska doesn't have.

Arizona does. It has been the second-fastest growing state since 1990, behind only Nevada, with the greater Phoenix area's population increasing 39 percent since 1995, climbing from 2.6 million to nearly 4 million during that time.

Nebraska's population is about 1.7 million. You do the math.

Nebraska had signed just three athletes from Arizona in the last 10 years, current Cornhusker Nick Covey in 2005, Richie Incognito in 2001 and Jon Clanton in 1998. Covey and Incognito came from Glendale's Mountain Ridge High, which didn't open until 1995 and now has an enrollment of 2,600.

Clanton came from Peoria's Centennial High, which opened in 1990.

Ironwood High, where Burkes and Hagg are among some 2,000 students, opened in 1986, the year after Nebraska's second-ever appearance in the Fiesta Bowl.

All five of this year's Arizona high school recruits gathered at Ironwood High to sign letters of intent. Red predominated. "The five were hugging each other like they were best friends," The Arizona Republic reported in the next day's editions. Nebraska can't sell Arizona athletes on weather, the story said, "but it can on passion."

When recruits visit on game weekends, they take the Tunnel Walk with the team, an experience conveying that passion in a unique, impossible-to-duplicate way.

Plus, Cornhusker fans know everything about the recruits, calling out their names. When he returned from his recruiting trip, Burkes told his coach at Moon Valley High in Phoenix that he felt like a rock star, The Arizona Republic reported.

Callahan and staff aren't looking for another Bret Michaels. They're looking for players who fit the Big 12 template, including wide-bodied guys to play in the offensive line, guys such as Burkes. And Arizona is a good place to look. ■



**Assistant Bill Busch**  
"orchestrated everybody" in Arizona.



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